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Ch. 1

Berrytail licked her newborn kits vigorously as Blackfur ordered. He watched Berrytail with approvement and nodded is black tail.

"Rest then I'll come and check on you," Blackfur said, then padded out, with his remaining herbs in his mouth. The soft sand in the cave almost made him slip but he recovered and muttered a curse under his breath. He stepped out of the nursery and into the sun and nodded to the light tabby cat sitting by the nursery, Brambleheart. Brambleheart scurried to his paws and rushed into the nursery. He saw his mate lying on the soft sand with two kits meowing beside her. Owltooth was soothing her kits in a corner, trying to coax them to sleep as not to disturb Berrytail.

"They're beautiful and strong," gasped Brambleheart, pressing his head to Berrytail's. "Just like you." Berrytail smiled and licked him affectionately on the cheek. Brambleheart crouched down and licked the dark tabby kit softly.

"I want to name him Hawkkit," breathed Brambleheart in awe.

"I already names the other one, Wolfkit," said Berrytail. The other kit had a grey pelt which resembled a wolf's.

"It's perfect," Brambleheart said. Brambleheart settled himself next to Berrytail and curled his tail around his, watching his kits proudly. Wolfkit and Hawkkit scrambled over each other to drink milk. Berrytail leaned her head on Brambleheart's and smiled blissfully.

Ch.2

Wolfkit took an unsteady step and Berrytail nudged him gently to reassure him.

"Hey, it's alright, you can do it," Berrytail whispered encouragingly. Owltooth watched with amusement. Her kits were almost six moons and she was aching to get back to warrior duties. A new queen, had just started living in the nursery, expecting in a moon, Lilypool. Lilypool cooed.

"Come on Wolfkit! We believe in you!" Lilypool cried. Wolfkit was more than half a moon old now. He wobbled slightly, biting his tongue as he pushed himself to his four tiny feet. With concentration, he took a few wobbly steps then started to run around wildly. Berrytail laughed and cheered.

"You did it!" she cried. "I'm so proud of you." Wolfkit grinned and wiggled his tail.

"I did it!" he repeated.

"Good job Wolfkit!" smiled Lilypool. "I knew you could do it!" Hawkkit shuffled on his belly. He was curled up next to Berrytail, watching everything in awe.

"I wish I could do that," muttered Hawkkit. Berrytail nudged him.

"Of course you can," she encouraged. "Try it." Hawkkit hesitated, nervous. Wolfkit bounded up to him, wiggling his tail.

"Don't worry. It's not hard!" smiled Wolfkit. "Just do it like me!" Wolfkit walked towards Lilypool as an example and Hawkkit watched in awe. He tried to scamper on his paws carelessly. Wolfkit went up to him and took his scruff in his mouth. His little teeth dug into Hawkkit's furry neck. He tried pulling Hawkkit up with all his strength. Hawkkit struggled to put his feet on the ground and

finally managed and with Wolfkit balancing him, Hawkkit managed a few unstable steps.

"Hawkkit! That was awesome," pressed Berrytail, pride glowing in her eyes.

"Mummy!" laughed Hawkkit. "I'm walking!" And together, Hawkkit and Wolfkit scampered around the soft sand in the nursery unstably.

"I'm so proud of my two kits!" Berrytail beamed. Just then Brambleheart trotted in and Wolfkit and Hawkkit ran to him. They ran around him, showing off their new ability.

"I can run!" exclaimed Hawkkit. "I did it!" Brambleheart exclaimed in surprised and let out a proud purr.

"You both are so strong! I'm so proud of you," he said. He bent down and gave them each a gentle prod. They stumbled but quickly got up again to bite on their father's tail. Berrytail's eyes were bright. Brambleheart walked over to her and licked her on the cheek.

"I'm so proud of our kits," he whispered into her ear. She nodded in reply. They watched their kits run around and play with pride and love in their eyes.

Ch. 3

Wolfkit watched in dismay as Tigerpaw, Oakpaw and Forestpaw said their goodbyes. Wolfkit had only known them for a moon and a half but he had looked up to them greatly. They had been there, running about the nursery and pretending to fight before he could even walk and he admired them greatly. He was sad to see them and Owltooth go. Wolfkit pouted and frowned when Oakpaw flicked his tail at Wolfkit in goodbye.

"Come on. Why are you mad?" asked Oakpaw, twitching his tail. He couldn't hide his excitement of becoming an apprentice but he put on a neutral face for Wolfkit.

"I don't want you to leave. It's not fair," grumbled Wolfkit briskly. "I want you to stay here and play with us."

"Just because I live in the apprentice den doesn't mean I won't be able to play with you. I'll even hunt for your prey and bring it to you here," promised Oakpaw. Wolfkit thought for a bit then grumpily agreed.

"Great, so it's a deal then?" asked Oakpaw.

"Fine. But I don't eat prey yet... but I'll still try it," Wolfkit said.

"Alright then it's settled," smiled Oakpaw before padding out of the nursery. Berrytail rolled onto her side and closed her eyes.

"Ahh, time to relax," she said. Wolfkit shuffled to Berrytail's side for a drink fo warm milk but Berrytail pushed him away gently.

"I think you're old enough to get your own prey," smiled Berrytail. "I'll bring you to the fresh kill pile and you can chose." Wolfkit gaped. He thought for a moment before nodding.

"Alright! I'll be like an apprentice," Wolfkit grinned. He shook his brother who was snoring gently.

"Hawkkit! I'm going to eat real food. Do you want to come?" he asked. Hawkkit opened one of his little eyes groggily then closed it again, mumbling softly. Wolfkit shrugged and trotted to the entrance of the camp. Berrytail signaled to Lilypool to watch over Hawkkit and followed Wolfkit out. The sun shone bright down on the camp. Wolfkit skittered on the soft soil towards the high rock. At the bottom was the fresh kill pile. Berrytail walked behind him, watching him with a smile. They reached the pile and Wolfkit studied it carefully.

"What should I eat?" he asked.

"You can chose," said Berrytail. Wolfkit's eyes went wide.

"Anything I want?" he gasped.

"Anything," agreed Berrytail with an amused smile. "But you should try the frog first." Wolfkit made a disgusted face.

"Ew, that's disgusting. They're slimy," grimaced Wolfkit.

"Don't say that," sighed Berrytail. "Warriors work hard to hunt frogs. Anyways, I'll peel the skin off for you. The inside is nice and soft. Come on." Berrytail picked up a frog and they padded down the island and through a few bush and settled down gazing at the stream flowing in front of them. While Berrytail peeled the frog's skin off, Wolfkit bounded up to the stream and licked the cool water. It was cold, fresh and clear. It was shallow and the bottom was covered in pebbles. Owltooth had told Wolfkit that the camp was chosen to be next to the stream so they could get water easily and it was not dangerous. Wolfkit sprang into the stream and paddled furiously. He could not touch the ground but there was no current and the water brought him nowhere. Berrytail had brought him twice here so he could practice swimming. Kits were to learn to swim at a very young age. After-all, it was Riverclan not Shadowclan. Wolfkit swam about until he lost his breath and pulled himself out and shook his pelt. Berrytail had finished peeling the frog.

"Here, take a bite," she said, pushing the frog forward. Wolfkit sniffed it tentatively. He scrunched up his nose.

"It smells weird," he commented. Then he opened his mouth and showed his small fangs and bit into the frog. His eyes went wide but he took a bite. Berrytail waited as he chewed slowly then gulped.

"Tastes..., good," Wolfkit said after some thought. He took another bite. After another two bites, he was full.

"Go drink some water," Berrytail urged before gulping down the rest of the frog.

"What are you going to do with the skin?" inquired Wolfkit, lapping the stream water. "Throw it away?" Berrytail shook her head.

"Never waste. I'll see if one of the elders want it. They don't do much so they might like to chew on something to pass time. The skin is very chewy. You can spend days chewing on it," explained Berrytail, flicking, her tail. Wolfkit bounded after her.

"Can I follow you," Wolfkit asked.

"Yes, if you don't annoy them," Berrytail said with the frog skin in her mouth. They ducked under a log with moss growing around it and under the shadow of a large tree. Under the tree basked two cats. A light grey spotted cat, Rainwhisker and a dark red cat, Leafclaw.

"Hello Rainwhisker, Leafclaw. Everything alright?" asked Berrytail. Wolfkit looked around in awe. He saw the elder den behind the tree. A big bush with a nice and cosy space inside.

"I'm Wolfkit!" Wolfkit said, coming up to Rainwhisker. Rainwhisker smiled.

"I'm Rainwhisker," she purred. She loved kits. She was a mother herself.

"I thought maybe one of you would like a frog skin?" asked

Berrytail. Leafclaw flicked his tail.

"No thanks. Not for me," he growled. Wolfkit frowned. He already didn't like this elder.

"Do you sleep all day?" asked Wolfkit pointedly. Leafclaw growled and flashed Wolfkit a look. Berrytail wrapped her tail around Wolfkit and pushed him back.

"Wolfkit," she scolded softly. "Don't be rude."

"Rude? He's not being rude, he's just being honest and curious," Rainwhisker said.

"Kits my days were kept in the den silent the whole time till they became apprentices and when they did, they brought back food for the elders without fail," snapped Leafclaw. "Oakpaw, Tigerpaw and Forestpaw aren't doing a very good job."

"Sorry to disturb you then," Berrytail said. "Where is Sunfall by the way?" Just then a light orange cat crawled under the log and padded forward. She had white and faded fur at many places.

"Did someone say my name?" asked the sleek cat. Wolfkit bounded up to her. "Hello young one. Ah Berryfall is here, so you must be Haw- no Wolfkit."

"Yeah!" cried Wolfkit.

"Sunfall. Nice to see you," smiled Berryfall. "Would you like this frog skin?"

"Ooh, I'd love it thank you," Sunfall said, taking the frog skin and falling to the ground. She chewed on it thoughtfully.

"Well, we won't disturb you anymore," Berrytail said. "Come along Wolfkit." Wolfkit nodded and scampered under the log.

"He's got a lot of potential that one," Rainwhisker said approvingly. Berrytail smiled proudly and dipped her head under the log. She followed Wolfkit into the clearing and navigated him back to the nursery. She could see his muscles getting tired.

"Rest now," Berrytail said. Wolfkit was about to argue but he thought better of it and curled up in the warm sand. Hawkkit was just waking up.

"He made not a noise," Lilypool said.

"Good. Hawkkit do you want to eat?" Berrytail said. "I just brought Wolfkit to eat some fresh prey." Hawkkit's eyes went wide.

"Really?" he asked.

"Yes," nodded Berrytail. Just then Lilyfoot collapsed to the ground and started panting.

"Ow," she grunted. Hawkkit sprung to her side and pressed her tummy.

"Are you ok?" he asked. Wolfkit's eyes opened and he leapt up in excitement.

"She's kitting," exclaimed Berrytail. She crouched to Lilyfoot's side. Wolfkit watched in awe while Hawkkit took a step back, scared.

"Wolfkit! You know where the medicine den is. Go get Blackfur. Now," hurried Berrytail. Wolfkit took the responsibility with pride and scampered out. Hawkkit attempted to follow his brother but he had shorter legs and stumbled.

"Hawkkit don't go, stay here," Berrytail ordered. "I don't want you wandering off." Wolfkit made it into the clearing and looked around. He tripped over a stone but quickly got back up and made his way towards the medicine den. A white and black cat spotted him.

"What's wrong Wolfkit?" asked the cat, Badgerfang.

"Badgerfang! Lilypool's kitting. Berrytail told me to get Blackfur," Wolfkit sai. Badgerfang sprung into action.

"Lilypool's kitting," yelled Badgerfang, racing to the medicine den. A slim white she-cat appeared from the warrior's den followed

by a tortoiseshell cat.

"Wolfkit, is she alright?" asked the white cat.

"She's ok for now Snowflame because Berrytail is with her," meowed Wolfkit sweetly. Badgerfang emerged from the den followed by Blackfur, carrying herbs. Blackfur ran to the nursery and slipped inside. Moaning and groaning could be heard. The tortoiseshell cat, Sorrelpelt.

"Come Wolfkit, you can join your mother," Sorrelpelt said, picking Wolfkit up by the scruff. More cats were coming out to know what the commotion was about. Sorrelpelt brought Wolfkit to the nursery entrance and Wolfkit scurried in. He ran to his Berrytail's side. She licked him lovingly.

"You did well," she whispered in his ear. Hawkkit pressed closer to Berrytail, scared for Lilypool.

"She's going to be fine right?" asked Wolfkit, watching Blackfur tending to Lilypool. Lilypool was bitting hard onto a stick.

"Blackfur will take care of her," assured Berrytail. Suddenly, the first kit arrived. Blackfur passed it to Berrytail. Without him telling her what to do, she licked the kit. Wolfkit watched in amazement.

"It's so small," he gaped.

"You were just like that," Berrytail murmured between licks. Hawkkit watched nervously. Lilypool's panting and cries of pain got louder. Hawkkit covered his ears.

"It's ok Hawkkit," Wolfkit said expertly. "Blackfur will take care of her." There was some hurried talking outside of the nursery then a ginger cat slipped into the nursery. He had a worried look.

"Lionheart, good you're here," Blackfur said. "Another kit is coming." Lilypool gasped then another kit was born. Lionheart took it in his mouth gently and in awe. He lay down next to Berrytail. He licked the kit just like Berrytail.

"Two healthy kits!" cried Lionheart between licks. "Come on Lilypool. You're doing great!" Berrytail nodded in encouragement. Lionheart bit his tongue as she yelped in pain. One last kit was born, it was smaller than the others and weaker. Blackfur licked it himself and made sure it was clean then pushed it to Lilypool's side to keep him warm.

"You're alright," he said. "The other kits are clean. Give them back to Lilypool. Two she-cats and one tom." Lionheart nodded numbly and slowly brought his kit to Lilypool's side. Berrytail did the same then ushered her kits to the side to watch silently. Lionheart was whispering encouragements in Lilypool's ear. He licked her cheek.

"They're so cute," Lilypool gasped finally.

"Yes, and strong," noted Berrytail. "What will you name them?"

"This one is coloured just like you," said Lilyfoot to Lionheart, nodding to one of the she-cats. "You should name her."

"Duskkit," said Lionheart. Berrytail smiled wistfully and padded closer. She let Wolfkit and Hawkkit approach the kits and look at them with big eyes.

"I'm naming the tom Volekit," said Lilyfoot. The small light brown tom seemed to wiggle in response. The last kit was coloured like Lilypool, lilac coloured.

"Lilackit," smiled Lilypool. Lionheart brushed his face against his mate.

"They're perfect," Lionheart breathed. Blackfur padded into the den and smiled, a few other cats poked their heads in. Lilypool informed him of their names.

"They're doing fine," Backfur confirmed after a simple check out. "This one, Volekit seems to be smaller and weaker than his sisters but he'll survive." Lilypool and Lionheart nodded fondly. Blackfur twitched his tail and walked out.

"We'll be able to play with them right?" asked Wolfkit.

"Not at the moment, look how small they are," said Berrytail. "And Lilypool needs to rest. And you too Wolfkit, don't try and get out of it." Hawkkit curled up in a ball without a word but Wolfkit relented. Everything was exciting. It was a waste of time, sleeping. He could do that at night. Berrytail pushed him down and he sighed and curled up next to his brother. Berrytail lay next to her kits and watched the happy couple. After a while, Lilypool got tired and closed her eyes, her kits sleeping pressed close to her. Lionheart solemnly padded out, head hung low, glancing back every few seconds.

"You can stay," whispered Berrytail. Lionheart brightened and slipped next to Lilypool and rested his chin on her. Wolfkit didn't see any of this. He was already fast asleep.

Ch. 4

Wolfkit bounded up to the Highrock. Lotusstar leapt onto the rock with grace. His beautiful silver pelt glowed.

"May all cats old enough to hunt in the river gather round," he called. All cats gathered around. Berrytail picked Wolfkit up and brought him back to the nursery. Hawkkit was waiting at the entrance.

"Why can't we watched from there?" pouted Wolfkit.

"Because you're not old enough to hunt in the river, besides," Berrytail said, flicking her tail, "you can hear just as well from here. Now hush." Wolfkit made a face but looked at the High Rock in the distance. Hawkkit watched without a word.

"Today, we celebrate a big day, new kits have been born to the clan," declared Lotusstar. Murmurs and a few whistles were heard. Wolfkit shuffled his paws excitedly. "Duskkit, Lilackit and Volekit, three strong kits kitted by Lilacpool."

"Duskkit!"

"Lilackit!"

"Volekit!" The happy cries of the clan could be heard in the den and Lionheart emerged. All cats cheered and filed towards him. They congratulated him and took a look in the nursery where they congratulated Lilypool and told her how strong she was. Wolfkit got tired of it all and pulled his brother away.

"Come on, let's explore the camp while everyone is distracted," he whispered to Hawkkit. Hawkkit was reluctant but his brother's strong pulls were too hard to ignore. They trotted towards the warrior's den. A rasberry bush was growing in front of it. They crawled under and into the den. It was a small cave with sand inside and a tunnel led down. Hawkkit hesitated but Wolfkit pulled

him along.

"Come on! This is awesome. We're going to sleep here one day," Wolfkit said. Wolfkit pulled his brother along then stumbled. His small legs tripped over themselves and tumbled down the slope. Hawkkit peered down scared. Wolfkit shook himself and looked up.

"It's ok. Come on, it's pretty fun really," Wolfkit said, wiggling his tail. He continued walking down the sandy tunnel. Hawkkit hesitated but then took a step down the hill and topped over. The world went spinning around him and he felt his head hit sand then his back and his paws. Finally, he stopped falling and lay in a bundle on the ground. With a huff he got up and ran after his brother. After some while, they found themselves in a large space in the cave. There was a hole on top, letting sunlight shine through. The warrior's den was huge.

"It's so big!" cried Wolfkit. "I'm going to sleep here one day. And then I'll sleep in the leader's den!" Hawkkit looked around in awe, soaking in every detail. He twitched his ear. He heard heavy footsteps. Another cat.

"Wolfkit, someone's coming," he whispered. Wolfkit and Hawkkit ran to the side and pressed themselves to the wall. The cat appeared. He had cream coloured fur and bright eyes. It was Palestorm.

"Wolfkit, Hawkkit, I know you're here," he said, he padded to their little corner and they squealed at being found. "I could smell you from the entrance. No kits are allowed in the warriors den. Are you warriors?"

"Future warrior," Wolfkit said, flicking his tail to Hawkkit then puffed his own chest. "And future leader."

"Wow, well, as you said *future* . Not right now, let's go before anyone else comes," Palestorm said. He picked Hawkkit by the scruff and walked him up the slope. Wolfkit followed, scampering after them recklessly. Palestorm emerged from the den just as Stormfire came trotting to them.

"Wolfkit? Hawkkit? In the warrior's den?" He sighed. Palestorm sighed and nodded. Stormfire shrugged and nudged Wolfkit playfully. He entered the warrior's den and padded down the slope. Palestorm brought the kits back to the nursery where it was mostly peaceful now. Berrytail trotted to meet Palestorm.

"Where were you?" she exclaimed to Wolfkit. "You're not allowed to be out of the nursery unless you tell somebody."

"It's ok, we're alright," mumbled Wolfkit, slumping to the floor. Berrytail took him by the scruff and brought him inside followed by Palestorm and Hawkkit.

"They went into the warrior's den. I found them hiding there. Apparently Hawkkit is going to become a warrior and so it's alright if he goes there and Wolfkit is going to be leader so he's allowed to be in there," explained Palestorm with a hint of amusement. Berrytail sighed and flicked her tail.

"Sleep. Now," she said firmly. "Thanks Palestorm. I'll deal with them from now." Palestorm nodded, mumbled a congratulations to Lilypool and walked out. Wolfkit was glad to curl up against his brother and mother and sleep in comfort.

Ch. 5

Wolfkit crawled out of the nursery followed by Hawkkit.

"Be careful," called their mother. The three moon old kits scampered away. "Don't go out of camp!" Wolfkit lead the way, bringing Hawkkit past the fresh-kill pile and through some bushes. They walked down a slope and finally, Wolfkit heard the stream. The fresh and cold water was trickling slowly. Wolfkit ran up to it and splashed into the water. Hawkkit had always refused to join his brother when he went to explore camp so it was his first time here. Wolfkit swam with ease. He swam up and down the stream, paddling like an expert. Hawkkit approached cautiously and lapped the water. It felt good, sipping nice fresh water. He put a tentative paw into the water. Wolfkit swam up to shore and shook himself. He pressed himself next to Hawkkit.

"Come on, you can do it. It's really easy. It's like running but then you're wet and you don't touch the ground," explained Wolfkit.

"I won't be able to touch the ground," said Hawkkit.

"You'll be just slightly too short to touch the ground, like me. But you won't drowned," said Wolfkit. The bush behind them rustled and Berrytail appeared. She frowned.

"I told you not to go swimming without me. Wolfkit, you told me you were brining Hawkkit around," Berrytail bristled.

"I know how to swim," Wolfkit rolled his eyes. Berrytail twitched her tail.

"So? Accidents happen. You're just kits. No more swimming, understand? Not without supervision," Berrytail said.

"Ok, but can we swim now?" asked Wolfkit.

"Fine," muttered Berrytail, lying down. She watched as Wolfkit led Hawkkit to the water. "Be careful with your brother. Hawkkit, you should have learned swimming much earlier." Wolfkit led Hawkkit into the water. The water splashed at Hawkkit neck. He bit his tongue with the cold but bit down a squeak. Wolfkit made sure his brother was comfortable then plunged into the water and showed him how to paddle. Hawkkit did the same thing, he swam forward, pushing himself towards the middle, where it was deeper.

"Good job Hawkkit," said Berrytail. Hawkkit was bursting with happines and pride.

"I'm doing it! I can swim!" he cried excitedly.

"That's very good," commented Berrytail. Wolfkit swam alongside his brother, faster and more at ease but he made sure Hawkkit could keep up.

"Now try and go under the water and touch the ground with your front paws," said Wolfkit. "It's so fun." Hawkkit watched in horror as Wolfkit disappeared under water and touched the ground with his paws before pushing up to the surface.

"You just need to run, but you run downwards till you touch the ground. Then you can push with your feet and come up. It's easy. Try it, I'm right here," Wolfkit said. Hawkkit took a deep breath and pushed his head underwater. Water flowed in his ears and his head got cold but he paddled furiously downwards. He felt pebbles touch his paws and with a quick scramble, he pushed back up to the surface.

"You did it!" cried Wolfkit. "That's awesome."

"Thanks Wolfkit," smiled Hawkkit. Another cat pushed through the bush. It was Brambleheart. He smiled when he saw his kits. His eyes jumped open when he saw Hawkkit in the water.

"Hawkkit can swim?" he gasped. Berrytail flicked her tail to Wolfkit.

"He can now, because of Wolfkit," she said. Brambleheart leapt to the stream's side.

"Hawkkit! I'm so proud of you! You did it!" he exclaimed. "It's awesome! You're so brave." Hawkkit smiled proudly as he swam alongside his brother. They finally got out and shook themselves dry. Brambleheart licked Hawkkit proudly.

"You're a real Riverclan cat now," he said.

"He was already a real Riverclan cat," Berrytail said with raised eyebrows. "Let's get something to eat." Wolfkit ran to the fresh-kill pile, Hawkkit at his heels. Berrytail and Brambleheart followed after them. Wolfkit's new favorite food was frog while Hawkkit refused to eat anything but mice. Berrytail took a mouse and a frog and the whole family went to eat outside the nursery. Lilypool was trying to get some rest as her kits were sleeping. Berrytail peeled the frog skin off the frog and let Wolfkit eat. Brambleheart shared the mouse with Hawkkit.

"Wolfkit, you know, you can't always eat frog. Some other cats might want some too," Berrytail said as she watched Wolfkit eat enthusiastically.

"But I asked Badgerfang and Sorrelpelt if they liked frogs and they both said no," Wolfkit shrugged.

"Well, when you become apprentice you can hunt for your own frogs," said Berrytail.

"But you'll peel the skin off for me, won't you?" asked Wolfkit worriedly. "And I'll still be able to see won't I?"

"Of course! As for the first question, when you're an apprentice, I'm sure you're going to want to do things yourself," said Berrytail firmly. "You will be old enough to peel the frog skin and even maybe it eat for yourself." Wolfkit's eyes went wide in astonishment.

"That's so cool!" he gasped.

"But before we talk about being apprentices, let's see how

much you know about Riverclan," said Brambleheart, he looked at Hawkkit fondly. "Hawkkit knows so much. He sort of absorbs knowledge. Now, Hawkkit already knows this but Wolfkit, what tpyes of fish swim in our streams and rivers?" Wolfkit made a face as he thought. He remembered the fresh-kill pile. He remembered a large big shiny fish.

"Salmon!" he gasped. "We hunt salmon and... herring! Yeah... and and Goldfish and guppies sometimes and catfish but they're really agressive. Oooh and crabs!"

"Yes," sighed Brambleheart. "That's good but what do you know about these fish?"

"Leave him alone Brambleheart," Berrytail flicked her tail at him. "He knows enough. He can learn it when he becomes an apprentice. Wolfkit wanted to go see Oakpaw and the other apprentices. They should be back now. You can go see them Wolfkit." Wolfkit jumped up excitedly and pulled Hawkkit ear.

"Come on, let's go! Oakpaw said he would teach me the hunting moves he was taught today," exclaimed Wolfkit. Hawkkit pulled away reluctantly.

"I was going to go to the elders, they said they would tell me more about Riverclan," said Hawkkit.

"Elders!" gasped Wolfkit. "They're so boring. Come on, let's do something fun. Fighting and hunting is more fun than sitting around listening." Brambleheart frowned.

"Wolfkit, that's not true," he snapped. "Hawkkit is learning a lot. More than you actually. You will eventually learn about hunting moves and fighting moves when you're an apprentice, perhaps the same ones as Oakpaw is going to teach you and then you're going to be relearning things. Hawkkit is learning something new. So stop pestering him." Berrytail nodded Wolfkit away.

"Go Wolfkit," she nudged then took the left over frog inside to eat. Brambleheart gulped down the rest of the mouse and escorted Hawkkit to the elder's den. Wolfkit bounded towards the

apprentice den. Oakpaw and Tigerpaw were wrestling on the sandy ground, snarling and batting at each other. Forestpaw watched them calmly. Wolfkit waddled in and gaped.

"Are they going to hurt themselves?" he asked.

"No, they know what they are doing," said Forestpaw.

"This is so cool!" squealed Wolfkit. "I want to do that too!" Forestpaw smiled.

"While they're fighting, I could teach you a few moves," Forestpaw suggested. Wolfkit wiggled his tail and pretended to snarl.

"Oh yes please!" he gasped. Forestpaw crouched, his tail brushing the ground and his eyes scanning the area. His ears twitched at every sound. He showed his sharp teeth.

"Keep low so you can pounce and be ready when your opponent attacks," explained Forestpaw. Wolfkit imitated Forestpaw's position, snarling wildly. Oakpaw and Tigerpaw stopped wrestling and watched Wolfkit.

"That's it Wolfkit!" crowed Oakpaw. "You're doing very well!" Just then Silverfish padded in. She had a light grey pelt with darker grey patterns.

"Tigerpaw, we're going to patrol Thunderclan border. And Forestpaw, Lightningcloud wants you to go on hunting patrol now," Silverfish said. Tigerpaw and Forestpaw trotted out. "Hi Wolfkit!"

"Is Tigerpaw really going to patrol Thunderclan border?" asked Wolfkit in awe.

"Yes he is," smiled Silverfish. "And you will too, one day." She turned tail and walked out.

"Want to practice that crouch again?" asked Oakpaw.

"Yes, please," Wolfkit said. He crouched. "Have you ever gone to Thunderclan border?"

"Oh yes, many times. They stink and they think they're so brave and good. But they're not," Oakpaw said.

"Did you ever get into a fight?" asked Wolfkit.

"No but once, an apprentice tried to cross and I battered her ears till she ran of crying," Oakpaw said proudly.

"That's so cool!" cried Wolfkit.

"Yes now enough talking, we need to work on that pounce," grinned Oakpaw.

Ch. 6

Wolfkit shivered with excitement. He could barely sit still. Berrytail soothed him and licked the fur between his ears.

"Stop fidgeting," Brambleheart said. Wolfkit stopped fidgeting but his brain buzzed. Hawkkit was sitting straight and still next to Brambleheart, ears pointed and chest puffed. Brambleheart licked his fur and made sure it was nice and neat.

"There, you look handsome," he smiled. Berrytail touched her tip of her tail to Brambleheart's.

"Shhh, it's starting," she said. Lotusstar leapt onto the High Rock with ease. Wolfkit beamed up at her. He was going to be there someday and other kits would look up to him. Lotusstar beckoned Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw to the High Rock. Wolfpaw was shaking with excitement. He scanned the cats in front of him. Maybe he'd have Badgerfang or maybe Stormfire.

"Wolfkit and Hawkkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Wolfpaw and your mentor shall be Willowflight. I hope Willowflight will pass down all she knows on to you. Hawkpaw, your mentor shall be Salmontail. I hope he will pass down all he knows to you and you will both learn quickly and become proud warriors of Riverclan!" declared Lotusstar. Willowflight and Salmontail trotted up to meet their new apprentices, beaming. Wolfpaw touched noses with Willowflight and turned to face the crowd of cheering cats.

"Wolfpaw! Wolfpaw!"

"Hawkpaw! Hawkpaw!" He spotted his mouth, beaming with pride, calling out his new name. He jumped down from the rock and joined her. She purred gently and curled her tail around him.

"I'm so proud of you. Go with Willowflight and make me

proud," she said. Wolfpaw nodded briefly and raced to Willowflight's side. When the cheering and congratulations died down, Willowflight led Wolfpaw to the camp entrance. It was marked by a boulder and a cherry tree. They passed it and crossed the stream. They could not walk up the steep hill which loomed on the other side of the stream, instead, they crawled into a dark stone tunnel which led through the hill. On the otherside, a bramble bush covered the tunnel entrance. They shuffled through. Wolfpaw was practically buzzing with excitement. He was going out of camp. They made it out into the sunshine. They gazed at a beautiful landscape of spaced out trees and green grass. All kinds of trees were growing. Wolfpaw glowed with joy.

"Is this your first time out of camp?" asked Willowflight.

"Yes," muttered Wolfpaw in awe.

"That surprises me," she smiled. "I thought you were the kind of kit who would sneak out." Wolfpaw shrugged then when he thought about it, he would have done that but he had never actually thought about it.

"I hadn't really thought about it," Wolfpaw said. Hawkpaw poked his head through and brushed out with Salmontail padding behind him.

"We thought we'd show you the territory together," Salmontail said. Wolfpaw nodded. "Then let's go." Willowflight and Salmontail took a right and Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw followed.

"This is so exciting," Wolfpaw whispered. "I'm so happy we get to do it together."

"I know," agreed Hawkpaw.

"Right now, we're headed for Windclan territory," explained Willowflight. They walked through the woods which were getting denser and denser. After a while, the woods ended and they had to head up. They walked through tall grasses full of insects. Wolfpaw took in everything, running about trying to find new things. He looked closely at insects, bit on random flowers and pricked his ears

for prey. They finally heard the sound of rushing water. Wolfpaw bounded forward and past his mentors.

"Wolfpaw," snapped Willowflight. "I know you are eager but we are approaching enemy territory. Stay behind and don't act up." Wolfpaw nodded solemnly and reduced his pace. The broke through the tall grasses and down a small slope. A large stream was rushing at the bottom of the slope. Weeds and many plants grew by it. It was much to big to leap across. Wolfpaw sniffed. He smelt Windclan's strong scent. It tickled his nose and smelt horrible.

"This river runs past Windclan border and Thunderclan border. It also come up in the middle of our territory. So most of the river is ours and there are loads of salmon and other prey to hunt around it," exlpained Salmontail. Wolfpaw claws the dirt. He partly wished Windclan cats could come so he could use his claws on them. They continued down the river towards Thunderclan territory. The vast moorlands faded on the other side of the river and more trees started to appear. Soon, on the otherside of the river, was a forest. Wolfpaw realised it smelt different. It smelt stronger, denser and also disgusting.

"Thunderclan," bristled Wolfpaw.

"Correct, this is Thunderclan border," praised Willowflight. The trees on Thunderclan territory cast shadows on Riverclan and sent shivers down Hawkpaw's spine. Then they turned away from Thunderclan and stalked down their territory. They entered the woods once more and then heard water splashing. They continued for a while longer until they reached a small wetland.

"Wow," Hawkpaw muttered. The grass was wet and seemed to be floating on water. Moss grew everywhere.

"This is our miniature wetland," explained Willowflight. "There are many frogs and toads here. There are also tortoises, which are disgusting to eat unless we are starving. Many kingfishers and sometimes beavers too. But they have big teeth so you don't want to get in their way. Also, there are many ducks who come here. Those are ideal. It's hard to keep quiet when you need to stalk them in water, sometimes even swim after them or run through

murky water up to your chest but they are delicious. And there are plenty. Riverclan has the most prey of all. We never starve. Yes, in leaf-bare the water might freeze but there are even more mice and voles then as we let them breed throughout all the seasons as we hunt things from the water."

"So we only hunt water creatures unless it's leaf-bare?" asked Hawkpaw.

"We try to. It's plenty. You must have realised it by now when you take food from the foodpile," Salmontail said. "Yes, sometimes we do see mice and the temptation to hunt them is high. I miss eating mouse but it's worth it because we have plenty in leaf-bare." Hawkpaw nodded in understanding.

"Come on, we're going to go through," said Willowflight. Hawkpaw's eyes went wide.

"We have to go through that?" he asked pained.

"Yes, going through it won't nearly be as hard as hunting in it," said Salmontail. He flicked his tail and Willowflight stormed into the murky water. Wolfpaw didn't hesitate. He followed her in. The water was dirty and cold but Wolfpaw didn't care. At first, they could push through it touching the ground. Lilypads and moss grew on the surface and Wolfpaw had to push it away. They passed a few trees which could grow in the water too. Then they started swimming. The water made sloshing noises as all four cats paddled slowly through. Hawkpaw was lagging behind.

"I can't, my pelt is heavy and all the things in my path are slowing me," groaned Hawkpaw. "I can't go anymore."

"Don't be silly, Hawkpaw," Salmontail said, swimming back to the apprentice. "You can do it. Look at Wolfpaw. It's the same as swimming in the stream. Just keep paddling swiftly. Keep your tail up and let it float." They started to swim swifter and faster. The water made a lot of noise and if there were any prey, they would have long fled.

"You see how much noise we make swimming?" asked

Willowflight. "You're going to have to learn how to do it noiselessly." Hawkpaw groaned but Wolfpaw only swam faster and more determined. He didn't kick his paws to stay afloat, he let them push him forward with ease as if he was pushing the water out of his way. He kept his neck under water, fully submerged and he let his mouth go under water. It was a weird sensation at first but he got used to it. His nose was kept slightly above water and his tail trailed behind him, floating at the surface. His pelt pricked under water with excitement.

"Good job Wolfpaw!" Willowflight exclaimed. "That is called the hunters swim. Very impressive. You're doing it on instinct." Willowflight did the same and the noise of splashing reduced. Salmontail did the same and asked Hawkpaw to watch carefully.

"You try it," Salmontail told Hawkpaw. "Copy out position." Hawkpaw was hesitant to put his whole neck underwater but finally did then he didn't want to put his mouth in too but did. He tightened his lips together and put half his head in. He brought his tail up and slithered in the water soundlessly. Salmontail praised him with a small cheer and a smile. The four cats swam noiselessly through the wetland. They finally managed to touch the ground and slowly waddled to shore. Wolfpaw shook himself and relished the idea of coming back and hunting. Willowflight put her tail to his shoulder.

"Come on, there's more to see," she said. They went through the woods once more for a long while, it was a long and tedious trek and Wolfpaw soon got bored. It was his first time in the territory though and any sign of prey made him jump. Soon, they heard the rushing of water.

"This is the same river we came across at Windclan and Thunderclan border," said Willowflight when the river was in sight. It was wide and the current was much stronger than the stream in camp. Wolfpaw peered in. He saw a flash of silver.

"I saw something!" he cried.

"Must be a salmon," said Salmontail. "But we're not here to hunt. Our fresh-kill pile is filled to the brim. No cat needs to share."

"I always share with Berrytail," Wolfpaw pointed out frowning. "I didn't know we could eat something ourselves."

"Of course you can but when you're still a kit..., or apprentice, you don't need to eat as much although after this long trek you should probably eat your own prey by yourself tonight," said Willowflight. Wolfpaw nodded eagerly. They walked along the river for a while.

"How do we cross?" croaked Hawkpaw. He was still wary about the swim earlier. "Do we need to go back the other way again?" Their camp was on the other side of the river.

"No, we dealt with that problem long ago, look," Salmontail said. He pointed at a log in the distance. It was on top of the river and served as a bridge. "We will use that." Wolfpaw bounded over to it excitedly.

"Be careful, don't fall," said Willowflight. "Jump on then balance, use your tail. It's like walking normally, it may wobble a bit and the noise of rushing water might alarm you but just don't get scared and you'll make it." Wolfpaw nodded and leapt on with agility. He wobbled slightly at first but dug his claws into the tree.

"Good idea," said Willowflight. "I forgot to mention, if your scared and since it's your first time, unsheathe your claws." Wolfpaw reached the other side and jumped down nimbly. Willowflight crossed without problem then Hawkpaw crossed without a fuss although he tipped over precariously at one point. Salmontail jumped on and ran to the other side with ease.

"If we continued down the other side of the river, what would be there?" asked Wolfpaw, nodding to the side they had just been on.

"Well, back there, there is an old abandoned twoleg den and beyond is the Thunderpath," said Willowflight. Wolfpaw gasped. "But we don't need to see that now. I think you're both tired and we should get back now. It's enough for today." Hawkpaw sagged in relief but Wolfpaw dipped his head in disappointed. They padded towards camp and as they got nearer, Wolfpaw felt himself get

more tired. Maybe Willowflight was right. They ducked through the bush at the entrance and crawled through the tunnel with ease and they were back in camp.

"Tomorrow, I'm bringing you hunting," said Willowflight. "Be ready at dawn." Wolfpaw grinned with excitement. Salmontail lead Hawkpaw away and Willowflight marched off. Wolfpaw ran to the fresh-kill pile. He searched through it. It was full of big prey. Willowflight had been right, most of the food was from the river or the wetland. Wolfpaw gaped at a big duck buried at the bottom of the pile. It was huge. There were a few fish and many frogs. Mostly there were long salmons. He searched for something nice.

"Want to share the duck with me, Tallwhisker, Sunfall, Tigerpaw and Forestpaw?" asked a voice. Wolfpaw swiveled around. It was Oakpaw.

"Really?" he said. "Cool. I've never tasted duck. It's huge."

"I know, the dawn patrol caught it together," said Oakpaw. "Did you know we only have one hunting patrol a day and there is no pressure on them?"

"What do you mean?" frowned Wolfpaw.

"Look how much food there is, way too much. We don't need too many hunting patrols and if they come back with nothing nobody would notice," explained Oakpaw. He took the duck out and dragged it to the apprentice den. Wolfpaw had a skip to his step. He was going to be sleeping in the apprentice den!

"You smell like the wetlands. You went swimming there?" inquired Oakpaw.

"Yep," nodded Wolfpaw. Forestpaw and Tigerpaw were sprawled on the sand. They pricked their ears when Oakpaw brought the duck.

"Let's eat," said Oakpaw. Forestpaw and Tigerpaw sprung to the duck. They tucked in happily.

"How about Sunfall and Tallwhisker?" asked Wolfpaw.

"Tallwhisker said we should bring it to him once we've had our share and he'd eat the rest with Sunfall," explained Oakpaw through mouthful. He spit out the feather. "Come on, tuck in." Wolfpaw took a small bite. He chewed slowly. The meat was juicy and tasty. Blood rolled down the side of his mouth.

"Mmmmhmmm," Wolfpaw said. It was delicious. He spat out a feather and took another bite. "I think this is my new favourite food. Sorry frogs."

"I know right!" cried Oakpaw. The apprentices ate till they were full and there was still plenty left for Tallwhisker and Sunfall. Forestpaw volunteered to bring the duck to them and Wolfpaw curled into a ball on the warm sand. It was bliss. He loved being an apprentice.

Ch. 7

"Wake up!" said a voice hurriedly. Wolfpaw growled. *Go away. I'm sleeping. Berrytail, just one minute.*

"Is he always like this?" asked another voice then a paw prodded Wolfpaw in the ribs. He rolled over and squeaked. Slowly, he blinked his eyes open.

"What is it? What's so important you need to wake me," he grumpily asked, getting up. Hawkpaw and Oakpaw stood over him.

"It's already dawn and Willowflight is calling for you," informed Hawkpaw. "So get your butt to the camp entrance."

"That's all?" asked Wolfpaw. He yawned and trotted out. The sun was almost fully in the sky. He pondered about eating something first but he heard Willowflight calling him angrily.

"Late," she said.

"By a bit," he shrugged.

"I won't tolerate it. If you're late again. You'll babysit the kits for the whole morning next time and then pick ticks out of the elders for the rest of the day."

"Fine. I'm sorry."

"Let's go. If you do well today, you can eat the prey you catch." Wolfpaw trotted after Willowflight. They went through the tunnel. A strong whiff of other cats caught WOlfpaw's nose. He peered out of the tunnel. A border patrol had just come back. How early did they wake up? Berrytail was with them. Wolfpaw bounded up to her.

"Hey! We're going to hunt now!" he told her.

"That's great honey, Willowflight is waiting for you," smiled

Berrytail. Willowflight was watching him with a scowl. He raced up to her.

"Sorry," he muttered. She flicked her tail and they walked into the woods. Birds chirped and the air was fresh and cool.

"Let's start with the hunter's crouch," said Willowflight. She pulled her stomach to the ground and her tail brushed lightly against the floor. She scanned the woods with her eyes and her feet slowly crept forward. Her chin almost touched the ground. "Your turn."

"Ok...," Wolfpaw hesitated. He crouched low.

"If there is prey, you need to pounce so your hind legs need to be ready and you need to balance on them," said Willowflight. "That's good. Now pounce on that rock." Wolfpaw nodded and got ready. He put his weight on his back legs and using all his power, he leapt up. He landed on the rock neatly.

"Good, but you need to stretch your front paws out," said Willowflight. Wolfpaw practiced again. And again. When his hunter's crouch was perfect and his pounce was quick and deadly, he learnt how to stalk. Willowflight taught him how to differentiate sounds and smells and how to stalk an animal. Soon Wolfpaw was ready to hunt. The went deep into the wood.

"We're going to start by hunting mice as hunting in the river is harder and for that you need to practice your swimming and as it is almost leaf-bare, we'll be hunting more mice, voles, moles and squirrels," explained Willowflight. Wolfpaw nodded. Suddenly, the smell of mouse came from his left. He flicked his tail to Willowflight. She understood and let him stalk it. She watched a bit further off as he stalked the mouse behind a bush and up to the roots of a tree where it was cornered. Wolfpaw was practically celebrating his victory. He crawled nearer then, quickly and swiftly he jumped onto the mouse. he felt it struggle in his paws and for a second he marvelled at how he had caught it then quickly killed it in one blow.

"Very good," smiled Willowflight. "But next time, no

hesitation. It could have fled when you hesitated to kill it." Wolfpaw nodded. He took the dead mouse in his mouth proudly. "You can go back to camp now and eat and rest. Tonight, you're going to come with me and a few other warriors to patrol the Thunderclan border. Wolfpaw nodded vigorously. He skipped to the camp, light on his paws. It was already mid-day. He trotted into camp and ran to the nursery. Lilypool was resting while Duskkit and Lilackit were pretending to fight. Volekit was watching them, twitching. The kits raced to Wolfpaw.

"Did you catch that?" asked Duskkit.

"All by myself," said Wolfpaw proudly.

"Wow! That's incredible," cooed Lilackit.

"Can you teach us?" asked Duskkit. "I bet I could catch it too." She jumped onto her sister who squealed and the rolled over each other, hissing cutely. Wolfpaw smiled. Volekit watched him with interest.

"You alright?" asked Wolfpaw. Volekit nodded and returned to his mother's side. He pressed himself close to her and watched Wolfpaw. Wolfpaw frowned then turned to walk out. Lionheart bumped into him, salmon in mouth.

"Sorry," he said, dropping the salmon. Wolfpaw apologised in turn. "Did you catch that?" Wolfpaw's face brightened. Finally a warrior recognising him.

"Yep!" he said proudly.

"That's great! Good job Wolfpaw," Lionheart said distractedly. He entered the nursery. The kits inside squealed and surrounded him and Lilypool awoke.

"I got this salmon for you," Lionheart said. Wolfpaw padded out to find a place to eat by himself. He crawled under a bush and took a bite of his mouse. It wasn't as good as the duck but it was his first catch and to him, it tasted delicious. He saw Brambleheart entering camp. He rushed to meet his father.

"I caught my first mouse!" cried Wolfpaw. Brambleheart smiled.

"No surprise," he said, he padded off to the warrior's den. Yawning, Wolfpaw returned to his own den, it was empty. He sprawled on the ground, happy to have the place to himself. He wished Berrytail was with him though.

Ch. 8

The sun was setting and Wolfpaw yawned, walking out of the apprentice den with wobbling legs. He trotted to the camp entrance where Stormfire, Owltooth and Willowflight were gathered. She smiled at him.

"Not late this time," she said with a nod. "Good." He slipped out of camp with the other cats behind him. They went left, heading straight for Thunderclan territory. Wolfpaw trotted proudly in front of Owltooth.

"You grew up so quickly," she commented. "Yesterday, you were just a kit." They soon heard the trickling river and the dense forest loomed in front of them. They marked the border quickly then continued down. It was a long walk. They went up a bumpy terrain where the river ran swiftly and Wolfpaw was getting tired. Eventually, they reached a place where the river widened and started flowing much quicker. The currents were much stronger and big rocks were poking out of the water. It flowed away, out of Riverclan territory. They had made a long walk and Wolfpaw's legs hurt. Willowflight stayed by his side on the way back, sensing his tiredness. Finally, Wolfpaw saw the camp and his step was lighter. They entered the camp. Stars were shining in the sky and the clearing was lit with the light of the moon.

"I know you're tired so tomorrow, in the afternoon, we'll do a bit more hunting," Willowflight said. Wolfpaw nodded and yawned. Shaking himself he trotted back to the apprentice den. The patrol had been interesting although they had met no cat. He spotted Hawkpaw, curled up in a corner and, missing Berrytail, he lay down next to his brother. He pressed his side to his Hawkpaw's warm stomach and lay his head down. He closed his eyes and fell into a blissful sleep.

Ch. 9

It was afternoon when Wolfpaw finally heaved himself up and out of the apprentice den. His stomach grumbled but he had no time to eat. He joined Willowflight at the entrance. She slipped out of camp and he followed groggily. They headed to the middle of the woods. Willowflight told him more about stalking and hunting and she had him do some exercises. He went through them without thinking about it.

"Wolfpaw!" snapped Willowflight. "You're no concentrating." Wolfpaw snapped out of his thoughts.

"Oh sorry," he apologised, looking at his feet.

"Let's try some fighting moves then," sighed Willowflight. Wolfpaw brightened. "Let's try the front paw blow." Wolfpaw nodded. He had heard about it from Oakpaw.

"You have to be strong on your back legs. With your front paw you're going to bring it down on your opponents head. It's easy but with strength you could greatly wound your opponent, try it," Willowflight said. Wolfpaw hesitated. What did she mean?

"Right now? On you?" Wolfpaw asked.

"Who else?" Wolfpaw frowned then crouched. He sprang up and brought his front paw down as hard as he could on Willowflight. She didn't flinch.

"Not bad, but it isn't pouncing like you're hunting prey. It's fighting. Try harder and faster," Willowflight said. Wolfpaw went again. This time, he brought down as much force as he could. WIllowflight didn't make a move once more.

"Try it again, don't hit me on the top of my head, try the side," Willowflight suggested. Wolfpaw nodded and tried once more. This time, Willowflight staggered away slightly. Wolfpaw

beamed with triumph.

"Better but not good enough," reported Willowflight. Wolfpaw tried once more, then again. Soon, he could make Willowflight stagger back maximum two steps. "That was better." Wolfpaw panted but puffed out his chest in pride.

"Let's try an easy teeth grip next," Willowflight said. "Alright, leap at me and try to bite my tail, or one of my paws and hold on." Wolfpaw chose her tail. He leapt at it, paws outstretched but she whipped it away. He stumbled and fell.

"Again. Faster," she said. Wolfpaw leapt again, eyes fixed on her tail. His front paws thudded to the ground and his teeth sunk into her tail. "Good." Wolfpaw let go. They continued learning easy skills and practicing over and over. Finally, the sun started setting and they had to go back to camp. Wolfpaw's stomach was growling fiercely now. He raced to the food pile and took a salmon. It was slim and long. big enough for two cats but there were so many salmons it was much too much for the clan and Wolfpaw shrugged. He took the salmon down to the stream and ate it, listening to the calming trickling of water. He finished the salmon by himself, it tasted good after battle training. He spat out the scales and the bones into the stream which swept them away. He sighed, it felt good to have a full belly. He would rest well.

Ch. 10

Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw followed their mentors across the log. The stream roared angrily. Wolfpaw landed on the other side with a thud. Hawkpaw and Wolfpaw stayed close to each other as they followed the river down then started going further away form the river and camp.

"We're going to the abandoned twoleg place," whispered Wolfpaw to Hawkpaw. Hawkpaw nodded in response. They walked past trees and finally, they saw a big shape looming in front of them.

"That's the twoleg nest," said Salmontail. It was big and made of wood. It creaked and there were holes everywhere. Wolfpaw shivered. He didn't want to go any nearer. "Don't worry, we won't go nearer. It's in our territory but we seldom go near it." Wolfpaw nodded numbly. They continued further down.

"We're going to show you where the Thunderpath is. We never go there," explained Willowflight. "Unless we need to renew our scents and even then, we don't do it very often." Eventually, the trees stopped and a stench wafted to Wolfpaw's nose.

"Ew," coughed Hawkpaw. Wolfpaw's eyes watered. In front of them, the trees stopped and only grass grew and further along, was a large big expense of grey. Beyond that was nature once more. Wolfpaw cocked his head. What a weird thing.

"We won't go any nearer," said Willowflight. "Let's wait." Suddenly, the ground trembled. Hawkpaw crept back into the shadows of the trees. Wolfpaw stayed put. A loud roar filled the air. Then a large monster on wheels roared by. The noise was deafening. Wolfpaw flattened his ears against his head and jumped back. Willowflight and Salmontail didn't even flinch.

"That was a monster. That's why we never come here.

Firstly, it's dangerous and secondly, these monsters scare prey away," explained Willowflight. She flicked her tail and the mentors led their apprentices back to camp.

Ch. 11

"How about the Thunderpath?" asked Wolfpaw. Hawkpaw looked at his brother in horror.

"Of course not," he said.

"Why not? Willowflight said no one goes there. So maybe there will be something interesting. Something they missed," shrugged Wolfpaw.

"You heard her, it's dangerous," Hawkpaw said.

"Come on, we've got the morning off. Let's do something fun," Wolfpaw said. Hawkpaw relented. Wolfpaw dragged his brother out of camp and they walked towards the river.

"This is a really bad idea," Hawkpaw scowled.

"What could go wrong,? Wolfpaw said. They climbed onto the log and slipped across it with ease. They were used to it after being apprentices for more than a moon. They trotted through the woods, tails held high.

"It's going to be so fun. To see them go by," said Wolfpaw. Hawkpaw didn't look so sure. Finally, the woods finished and the small expense of grass stretched to the Thunderpath. Wolfpaw trotted on the grass and lay on his tummy. Hawkpaw joined him after a while. A rumbling was heard and suddenly, a monster rushed past them. It was gone in a flash. Wolfpaw's ears were pressed to his head.

"Let's talk," he said. And they did. They talked about training and birds and mice and Lotusstar and Volekit and all sorts of things. They watched the monsters go by and soon, they were fazed at all. They didn't even flinch when a monster roared by. Time was spent laughing or almost crying. Wolfpaw relaxed and had fun. Hawkpaw even grew to like the rumbling of the monsters. Finally, it was time

to go and their bonding time was over. Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw hurried back to camp.

"It wasn't so bad," Wolfpaw said.

"We should do it more often," sighed Hawkpaw.

"I knew it! I was right!" cried Wolfpaw triumphal. Hawkpaw harrumphed but there was a glint of amusement in his eyes. They both squished together in the tunnel and promised themselves to go back there and talk.

Ch. 12

Leaf-fall had arrived. Wolfpaw trotted out of his den. Willowflight was not to be seen. There was a commotion at the camp entrance. Wolfpaw headed over. Cats were milling at the entrance including Berrytail and Brambleheart. Berrytail spotted Wolfpaw and beckoned him over.

"What's the matter?" asked Wolfpaw.

"It's Beestripe, he's been wounded," explained Berrytail softly. Beestripe was a light brown cat with dark brown stripes, the Riverclan deputy.

"Oh no," Wolfpaw frowned. Blackfur was pushing past everyone, yelling orders. The crowd parted and Beestripe was pushed forward. He was limping and half of his head was covered in blood. Forespaw walked behind him nervously, clearly distressed. Forestpaw's mentor was whispering to him softly. Lotusstar bounded up to Beestripe.

"What happened?" he exclaimed.

"Lightningcloud will explain," Blackfur said briskly. He motioned for a few cats to helped him carry him to the medicine den.

"Come on, this is not for us to hear," said Berrytail, walking away. Cats left in respect but Wolfpaw remained in earshot. Forestpaw, Lightningcloud, Crowfang and Badgerfang were facing Lotusstar, explaining.

"It was all my fault," wailed Forestpaw. Lightningcloud held Forestpaw up.

"It was not," he scolded, his eyes soft.

"What happened?" asked Lotusstar.

"We were going to patrol Thunderclan border. It was all going well. Then Forestpaw got too excited," explained Badgerfang. Forestpaw made an inaudible noise while Lightningcloud kept murmuring reassuring words in his ear.

"Forestpaw slipped into the water. And we were at the edge of Thunderclan so that's were the river goes big and where there are rocks," continued Crowfang. "The current immediately swept Forestpaw away. Without thinking Beestripe jumped in. The current was so strong and he managed to bring Forestpaw to the edge were me and Lightningcloud grabbed him. But he didn't have time to climb up himself. He hit a rock and went under. We ran along the river for some time until he bobbed up again. Half of his face was bashed and he was screaming that his left paw was limp. He finally managed to push himself to the edge where we all grabbed him up and brought him back here." Wolfpaw stared at Forestpaw. He hung his head in shame and guilt.

"At least they both survived," sighed Lotusstar. "I am going to check on Beestripe." He turned to Wolfpaw. "Since you heard everything, go explain to Brambleheart what happened." Wolfpaw nodded, embarrassed. He ran to the warrior's den and slipped in. A few warriors mumbled and muttered at his sudden entrance and Berrytail raised her eyebrows but he went over to Brambleheart.

"I need to tell you something," said Wolfpaw. Brambleheart narrowed his eyes but followed Wolfpaw out of the warrior's den. Wolfpaw recounted what he had heard Badgerfang and Crowfang say. Brambleheart was shaking his head sadly.

"Oh Beestripe, he was always the one who would do anything to save another cat in his clan. Even if it meant he died," sighed Brambleheart. He walked over to the medicine den. Wolfpaw scampered to the apprentice den to recount what had happened to Hawkpaw. Hawkpaw listened in horror and the two siblings went out to the Thunderpath to talk more about it. It was their new secret and favourite meeting place. They could talk for hours there. After a while, they decided to go back to camp to see if there were any developments. They crossed the log hurriedly and hurtled to the camp. The snuck inside, cats were gathered around the High Rock and Lotusstar was already there. Brambleheart was sitting at

the bottom with Blackfur and Beestripe. Beestripe's left side of his face was completely destroyed, Wolfpaw felt himself grow nauseous when he looked. Beestripe looked depressed and discouraged and Blackfur looked tired while Brambleheart was apprehensive. Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw crept to the back of the crowd.

"By now, you all know of the unfortunate accident. As much as Forestpaw thinks he is responsible for it, he is not and even Beestripe agrees. Forestpaw, you must stop blaming yourself," declared Lotusstar. Forestpaw was sitting next to Owltooth and his siblings, he looked down at his feet and licked his chest fur in shame. "Beestripe survived and is well but Blackfur says the injuries will never heal... Beestripe is now blind in one eye and reports that his other eye is unfocused. He also has a limp on his right foot. He will be retiring to the elders den knowing he did a great job as deputy. He fought bravely, lead well and most of all, he made so many sacrifices to keep this Clan going." All cats cheered.

"Now, the warrior code says I must appoint a new deputy before moonhigh, and I shall, now," announced Lotusstar. Everyone looked at each other and whispering broke out. "*I* say these words before , so that the spirits of our warrior ancestors and Beestripe may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Riverclan is.. Brambleheart." Cats were shocked and for a moment Wolfpaw could not believe his ears. He wiggled them.

"Who's the new deputy?" asked Wolfpaw to his brother. Hawkpaw's jaw dropped.

"Brambleheart?" he gaped. "But he's he's our father..." Cats started to mill around Brambleheart to congratulate him and to Beestripe to tell him how grateful they are for his service. Finally, everything died down and Brambleheart trotted to Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw.

"Brambleheart!" exclaimed Hawkpaw. "You're the deputy... But you're our father." Brambleheart licked him on the cheek.

"I know, and I still am. This changes nothing," he cooed. "I still love you." Wolfpaw frowned. This was so weird. He was used to Beestripe being the deputy. He couldn't just become an elder in one

day because of one accident.

"I'm going to talk to Beestripe," he mumbled. Brambleheart continued to talk to Hawkpaw. Wolfpaw sprinted to the medicine den where Lotusstar and Beestripe were talking with Blackfur. Wolfpaw broke into their conversation.

"You can't become an elder!" cried Wolfpaw. "Elders are grumpy and they sleep all day."

"Wolfpaw?" Lotusstar questioned confused. Blackfur was angry he had interrupted and Beestripe looked bemused.

"I can't fight anymore," Beestripe said. "Not with this horrible vision and my paw. That is my only choice. Besides, Brambleheart is your father, aren't you going to support him?"

"I know but... but I like you. *You* should be the deputy. Things can't just change because of one accident," Wolfpaw burst out, looking baffled. Lotusstar softened.

"I know it is a big change and I do not take it lightly. One of my warriors was injured badly but we need to adapt as well as we can. Tonight there is a Gathering. Do you want to come? It'll be your first. Hawkpaw can come too if he likes," suggested Lotusstar. Wolfpaw brightened.

"We'd love to!" he squealed. "Thanks Lotusstar." He scampered off without even looking at Beestripe. He rushed to the apprentice den where Hawkpaw was talking to Forestpaw.

"Lotusstar said we could go to the Gathering tonight," he announced. Hawkpaw leapt to his feet in excitement.

"That's awesome!" cried Hawkpaw.

"I'm supposed to be a warrior soon," sighed Forestpaw. "And I go ahead and put the deputy in the elder's den."

"Don't worry Forestpaw," assured Wolfpaw. "I just talked to Lotusstar and Beestripe, they're not even mad."

"I ruined Beestripe's life," Forestpaw winced. "I think he might be just a tinge mad." Wolfpaw shrugged, he had bigger things on his mind. Like the Gathering.

Ch. 13

Wolfpaw was practically shaking with excitement.

"Stop moving," snapped Hawkpaw in his ear. They were outside of the camp entrance, waiting for Brambleheart and Sorrelpelt. They finally came.

"Sorry," breathed Brambleheart. "There was an issue with the border patrol for tomorrow." Lotusstar flicked his tail.

"Let's go," he said. The Riverclan cat's bounded to the right and towards Windclan. They swerved towards Shadowclan and leapt through the woods. Wolfpaw felt the unity of his clan as they ran swiftly together. They reached the river and Lotusstar jumped right into the middle of the river. Wolfpaw halted and gaped. But Lotusstar didn't fall, he just stood there, balanced himself once more then jumped to the other side.

"There's a rock in the middle," whispered Hawkpaw in Wolfpaw's ear. Oh. Wolfpaw closed his mouth silently and watched as each warrior jumped to the otherside. Then it was his turn. Brambleheart, Lionheart and Snowflame hadn't crossed yet.

"The rock is right in the middle, it's big you'll land right on it. Look, when the water goes down you can see the tip," reassured Snowflame.

"Don't worry," called Lotusstar from the otherside. "You need to land on the rock strong so the water doesn't sweep you away but it'll be fine." Wolfpaw thought about Beestripe and hesitated. He didn't want to become an elder.

"Come on Wolfpaw," said Brambleheart. "You can do it." Wolfpaw hesitated once more. "Hawkpaw go first." Hawkpaw nodded. He had watched the others do it. He leapt cleanly onto the rock but he wasn't very strong and nearly toppled over as a current swept past him. He had his feet glued to the rock. He stood there,

unable to move.

"You can do it Hawkpaw! I know you can! Make me proud," yelled Brambleheart. Hawkpaw gulped and leapt to the otherside. He made a frantic scramble and Ottercry hauled him up. Brambleheart pushed Wolfpaw forward.

"I knew you could do it Hawkpaw! Good job!" yelled Brambleheart then turned to Wolfpaw. "Go." Wolfpaw gulped and leapt. He felt the wind rushing around him and a rush of adrenaline. He landed perfectly and gripped on. A strong wave of water pushed against him but he didn't budge. He beamed with pride. It wasn't scary after all. He jumped again and landed neatly on the otherside. Snowflame went then swiftly, after was Lionheart last went Brambleheart. They continued through Windclan territory. Wolfpaw breathed in the wind and he loved running freely through the long grass.

"I didn't know Windclan would let us do this," said Wolfpaw.

"Normally they don't but they let us just when it is a full moon," explained Snowflame. Wolfpaw nodded. He spotted four large trees in the distance. Finally they entered the clearing where there were four big trees and a large rock. All the other clans were already gathered. When they saw Riverclan, the leader nodded at each other and leapt onto the rock.

"Thunderclan is thriving. Today, the first day of leaf-bare has come and new kits have been born to Thunderclan. Rosepetal has kitted three healthy kits, Pinekit, Thornkit and Barkkit," declared Brackenstar, Thunderclan's leader. He backed away to let Brightstar, Shadowclan's leader step up. Her tabby pelt bristled as she stepped forward proudly. Her eyes gleamed.

"Pineki! Thornkit! Barkkit!" Cheers, mostly from Thunderclan, arose.

"Shadowclan too, is doing well. We have two new apprentices, Fernpaw and Rockpaw," declared Brighstar.

"Fernpaw!"

"Rockpaw!" Wolfpaw scanned the crowd and saw two apprentices in the middle of the Shadowclan cats dip their heads in embarrassment and pride. He wondered if Lotusstar would mention him and Hawkpaw.

"If they don't mention you, don't worry," whispered Snowflame in Wolfpaw's ear. "Lotusstar already told the Gathering about you last Gathering but you weren't there."

"Windclan is thriving. Prey has been plentiful and we are stronger than ever," Breezestar declared. She dipped her head as a few cheers erupted from Windclan and backed into the shadows.

"Of course he says that," scoffed Wolfpaw, waiting impatiently for Lotusstar's turn. Lotusstar stepped forward.

"Riverclan is thriving. Prey is running plenty, our apprentice den is full and we've got more apprentices and kits to come. Beestripe, has alas, turned to retirement and our new deputy is Brambleheart," declared Lotusstar. Wolfpaw watched the other cats reaction. They started talking between themselves in low voices. Hawkpaw nipped Wolfpaw on the ear.

"Stop day dreaming," he muttered. "Let's meet some cats." Wolfpaw reluctantly followed his brother. They joined a cluster of Windclan cats.

"Hi, I'm Hawkpaw," said Hawkpaw. "And this is my brother, Wolfpaw." The apprentices turned to them. A tortoiseshell cat smiled first.

"Hey! I'm Blossompaw," she said then nodded to an all white cat. "This is Snowpaw and this is Foxpaw." Foxpaw was a pretty ginger cat. Wolfpaw took a liking to her instantly then pushed the thought back. She was Windclan! They talked for a while until Lotusstar called Riverclan to go. Wolfpaw leapt away gratefully. He was getting bored by the talk of practicing fighting moves on logs. They swiftly crossed Windclan and back into their territory, Wolfpaw felt more at ease and could finally relax. They slipped into

the camp and he bounded to go tell Berrytail. She licked him on the cheek.

"How was it?" she asked.

"I met three Windclan apprentices, Foxpaw, Blossompaw and Snowpaw," explained Wolfpaw. "But they weren't very interesting But Foxpaw's pelt was beautiful." Berrytail raised an eye and smiled.

"Did you manage to cross the river ok?" she asked.

"Yes," nodded Wolfpaw. "It was scary but it turned out to be easy."

"I told Brambleheart to watch out for you," nodded Berrytail, "and Hawkpaw." With a smile, Wolfpaw trotted back to his den to reflect on the events of the day.

Ch. 14

Wolfpaw trotted to the Thunderpath. He hoped Hawkpaw was there. It would be sunset anytime now. He had had a long day of fighting and learning more about the wetlands with Willowflight and he felt his muscles aching for rest. His brain was almost asleep when he slipped down to the middle of the patch of grass and positioned himself in a small dip in the ground. Hawkpaw licked him on the ear.

"Are you listening?" he prodded.

"Wha?" Wolfpaw mumbled. He blinked his eyes to focus and looked at Hawkpaw. "Oh, good, you're here."

"I've been here from just now," Hawkpaw growled. "Were you not listening?"

"Sorry," muttered Wolfpaw sheepishly. "What did you say?"

"Thunderclan cats crossed out border today," explained Hawkpaw. Wolfpaw gaped.

"How?" he asked fur rising.

"It was morning patrol and a tree fell over the river," explained Hawkpaw.

"No way!" said Wolfpaw. "How could a tree have fallen?"

"I was there! Since it's leafbare, it's becoming colder and the tree was dead. It wasn't strong enough to hold and it fell. And Thunderclan thought it was a good idea to cross the border," bristled Hawkpaw.

"Is someone watching the border? Did you chase the cats out?" asked Wolfpaw, his mind reeling.

"No one is watching it right now but Brambleheart, Lotusstar

and a few warriors are discussing it right now," explained Hawkpaw. "We didn't see the cats who crossed but the scent was fresh and there were at least four of them."

"If I see one of them, I'm going to rip their pelts off," growled Wolfpaw.

"Should we go back and see if anything has happened?" suggested Hawkpaw. Wolfpaw nodded and they ran into the woods just as a monster roared by. They crossed the log swiftly and raced to camp. Once inside, they say a cluster of cats at the bottom of High Rock.

"I wonder what's going to happen," sighed Wolfpaw. "I want to go, if they're sending a fighting patrol."

"I'd rather not," shivered Hawkpaw. "Thunderclan cats are strong." Wolfpaw bristled.

"Not as strong as us," he snarled. Then Lotusstar leapt onto the High Rock.

"May all cats old enough to fish in the river gather around," called Lotusstar. Wolfpaw shot a look at Hawkpaw and they both skidded to a halt in front of the rock. Cats quickly gathered around and Wolfpaw heard Duskkit and Lilackit begging Lilypool to go nearer.

"First, I'd like to start off with the good news," Lotusstar smiled and flicked his tail. "Forestpaw, Oakpaw and Tigerpaw, please come forward. They walked forward, ears pricked and smiles on their faces. Brambleheart nodded to them and smiled as they passed him. They joined Lotusstar on the High Rock.

"I, Lotusstar, leader of Riverclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn," Lotusstar declared. "Oakpaw, Tigerpaw and Forestpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do," chorused the three apprentices excitedly and bravely.

"Then by the powers of , I give you your warrior names. Oakpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Oakfur. StarClan honours your loyalty, enthusiasm and bravery, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Riverclan. Forestpaw, from this moment on, you will be known as Forestblaze. Starclan honours your strength, kindness and generosity and we welcome you as a full warrior of Riverclan. Tigerpaw, from this moment on you will be known as.... Tigerleaf. Starclan honour you for your skill, commitment and confidence. We welcome you.., all three of you, as full warriors of Riverclan!" Wolfpaw watched in awe, his tail swished back and forth and he yelled out the new warriors' names.

"Forestblaze!"

"Oakfur!"

"Tigerleaf!" The three new warriors jumped off the rock and, tail held high, pranced to the back of the crowd. Lotusstar let the cries and cheer die down then nodded for Brambleheart to join him.

"Today," declared Lotusstar. "A dawn patrol, patrolling Thunderclan was scented crossing our territory." Gasps and snarls were heard. Lotusstar beckoned for Brambleheart to continue.

"They reported to me and I checked. There is a dead tree which has fallen across the river, giving Thunderclan access to our territory and us, theirs. We had no intention of crossing their border but as they have done it, we must do something to punish them and show them they are not to cross our territory," growled Brambleheart. There were yowls of agreement.

"I have decided that we will, tonight, wait for Thunderclan cats to come in. If nobody comes in tonight, then we will, in the morning, be attempted to move the tree away. Blackfur has already consulted Thunderclan's medicine cat, Gingerfall. She has confirmed that Thunderclan will not help in any way to move the tree," growled Lotusstar. Howls of anger arose but Lotusstar calmed it with a stern gaze.

"As the three new warriors must set vigil, tonight, I will let them watch for any invading Thunderclan," Lotusstar declared, Forestblaze, Oakfur and Tigerleaf grinned in pride. "Oakfur, you will stay right under the log and if any cat passes, let them then alert Forestblaze who will be set nearer to camp. Forestblaze you will alert Tigerleaf who will be at the log a bit further away from camp. And Tigerleaf will come and get us. In the clearing, tonight, I'm going to need warriors who will sleep here so if Tigerleaf comes back, we will spring into action." Cats started to shout out their names to volunteer.

"There is no need to shout!" called Brambleheart. "We have made a decision of which cats will go as we know you are all willing to go."

"The cats who will fight if there is a need will be, Forestblaze, Oakfur, Tigerleaf, Crowfang, Silverfish, Willowflight and I," said Lotusstar. "If there is no need for too many to go, then Crowfang and Silverfish, please stay behind. Brambleheart will remain here to watch over the Clan." There were a few grumbles of disappointment.

"Note that we did not chose the cats based on how good you are at fighting," Lotusstar said then dipped his head and leapt to the ground swiftly. He padded away. Wolfpaw pouted.

"I want to go on the patrol," he sighed. Hawkpaw approached him.

"Don't worry, we're better of not fighting," Hawkpaw murmured. Wolfpaw shot him a look and marched off. Willowflight caught up with him.

"You've done well in training today, you fought extremely well," Willowflight said. "Are you disappointed that you can't go to fight tonight?"

"Yes," admitted Wolfpaw with a sigh.

"I will talk to Lotusstar about it, afterall, I'm going. You've done well in fighting and I think you'll be able to take good care of

yourself," smiled Willowflight. Wolfpaw's eyes shone.

"Really?" he said grinning.

"Yes but no promises," smiled Willowflight. She walked over to Lotusstar.

Ch. 15

Wolfpaw curled up in the clearing of the camp. Willowflight sat next to him. He closed his eyes for rest. His ears pricked. Crowfang was whispering to Silverfish.

"I can't believe Lotusstar let an apprentice go in his place," he whispered under his breath. Wolfpaw sat up but WIllowflight gave him a warning look.

"He's a good fighter," she said sternly. "And he can hear everything you said." Crowfang looked down at Wolfpaw who shrugged. He sighed apologetically and leaned his head on his paws. Wolfpaw found his sleep restless, he couldn't help imagining the fight. How he would tear the cats apart.

"Remember, there's a high chance nothing will happen," warned Willowflight in his ear. "Don't get your hopes up." Wolfpaw nodded and tried to think about disappointment. He didn't want to get excited and get disappointed in the end. But he couldn't help it. By moon-high, there was still no sign of Tigerleaf. Wolfpaw was beginning to despair.

Hurried pawsteps. Tigerleaf burst into the clearing. Lotusstar, who was accompanying the sleeping cats with Brambleheart raced up to him.

"Ten Thunderclan cats just crossed the border!" he exclaimed. "They started hunting near the wetlands!"

"Those filthy dirt pelts," growled Crowfang. Wolfpaw felt himself bristling and snarling too.

"We're going to need more warriors, it's as if they're trying to take over our territory," snapped Lotusstar. "I'm going. Silverfish, go get Tallwhisker, Owltooth, Salmontail and Ottercry." Silverfish rushed to the den. The warriors were not sleeping. They had heard Tigerleaf. Tallwhisker, Owltooth, Salmontail and Ottercry emerged

with Silverfish. Lotusstar flicked his tail. Other warriors emerged with them.

"Good luck," they whispered.

"Let's go," he said. "Riverclan, attack!" The cats raced through the tunnel and towards the wetlands. Wolfpaw felt adrenaline pulsing through him. He ran at full pelt. His feet barely touching the cool ground. He felt the night air rush past him. He ran in unity with his clanmates. He felt proud, running towards battle with cats he trusted. As they ran, he saw Forestblaze appear from a bush and join them.

"Oakfur is near the cats already but he is still hidden," panted Forestblaze as he ran. Soon, Wolfpaw smelt the wetlands. Willowflight pressed close to him.

"Stay close to me at all times," she whispered as they ran. Wolfpaw nodded inwardly. Soon, they burst into sight of the woodlands and Thunderclan cats. The Thunderclan cats looked up in surprise and a few scrambled into the water. The Riverclan cats screeched angrily and threw themselves at Thunderclan. Wolfpaw hurtled into a young light brown cat. He unsheathed his claws and dug them into her. He felt blood pour out and he felt satisfaction. She reared up at him and clawed him on the snout. Wolfpaw shrieked in anger. He jumped onto her back and clawed at her. She twisted and they splashed into the wetland. She paddled furiously as the murky water engulfed her. Wolfpaw took a deep breath and sunk into the water. He felt at home there. He swam to the flaying figure and sunk his teeth into her foot. He tasted warm blood and dared to open his eyes. Blood was floating into the water. He needed air. He pushed up and broke the surface. The she-cat was paddling to the shore. Willowflight leapt into the water and grabbed the cat's scruff. Wolfpaw joined her at the shore. Willowflight shook the small cat angrily. Then dropped her to the ground. She scampered away, limping badly.

"I told you to stay with me," growled Willowflight.

"I was doing just fine," replied Wolfpaw.

"We outnumber them, that's why you're to stick with me," retorted Willowflight then nodded to a red cat fighting Crowfang. Wolfpaw nodded and they sprung into action. Willowflight flew into the cat and bit into his front paws. Wolfpaw jumped onto his back, making him stumble then bit into his ear and scratched his side. He drew blood but he felt nothing but anger and revenge. He wanted to teach them a lesson.

"Don't ever mess with Riverclan again! HOW DARE YOU INVADE OUR TERRITORY!" howled Wolfpaw.

"You filthy rat," snarled Crowfang and swiped at the red cat's feet. He fell to the ground and rolled over. Willowflight pinned him down and clawed at his face. He managed to get free and pelt furiously away. Wolfpaw turned to the battle. He saw a white cat fighting with Ottercry. Ottercry was hurt and had a long gash on her side. Wolfpaw hurled himself at the white cat angrily. He pushed her to the side and she fell into the water. Wolfpaw flew in after her. She flailed her paws and tried to bat him away but he was in his element. He took a breath and dived under. He swam into her side and dug his teeth onto her back. He grabbed her side with his claws and dug them into her. He could hold his breath for long and kept his position. The white cat tried to keep afloat while trying to rid of Wolfpaw. Then another cat sloshed in. Wolfpaw knew it was not Riverclan because it didn't swim as swiftly or with ease. It heaved the white cat then she meowed something and it swam down. It bit into one of Wolfpaw's paw and he let go. He rushed up for air and then dived down again. He swam for the new cat and bit into his paw. Another cat dived in. This cat was Riverclan, it was Willowflight. She was by his side in a flash. She clawed at the cat and Wolfpaw did the same with the other cat. Then they let them drag themselves out of the water and scramble away. Wolfpaw got out and shook himself clean. Willowflight did the same. She had lost some fur on her tail and her side was bloody but otherwise she looked fine. Only a few Thunderclan cats remained. Lotusstar batted a grey cat away and she howled in pain before retreating. Soon, the last cat pelted away.

"Don't ever come back!" yelled Wolfpaw.

"Don't ever think of setting foot here again," called

Crowfang.

"Flee from our territory Thunderclan. Run!" howled Lotusstar loudest. Soon, the last Thunderclan was out of sight. The Riverclan cats stood in silence, breathing heavily. Wolfpaw was the first to speak.

"That. Was. Awesome!" he cried.

"Wolfpaw," sighed Willowflight. "You've got cuts on your side and you've lost a bit of fur on your ear." Wolfpaw shrugged.

"Should we go check the border?" he enthused. Lotusstar's eyes gleamed, amused yb the apprentice but shook his head.

"No, I'll send Brambleheart to do that with Sorrelpelt, let's get back to see Blackfur," Lotusstar said. "You all did good." Oakfur trotted to Wolfpaw's side. He had blood running down his cheek and he was limping on his left paw but otherwise, he seemed fine.

"You were great," he grinned. "I saw you go underwater at some point. Fighting like a real Riverclan cat." Wolfpaw beamed with pride. Crowfang padded next to him.

"You know..., you were quite good. Thanks for the extra help," Crowfang nodded then retreated. They made their way to camp slowly.

"Oakfur, Forestblaze, Tigerheart! Thank goodness you're alright. And Wolfpaw. I was so scared for you but you all did great," panted Owltooth. Forestblaze leant against her to help her walk and Oakfur reduced his pace to walk beside her. Wolfpaw trotted forward and slipped into the tunnel after Lotusstar. Cats were streaming out of their dens to greet them. Wolfpaw felt like a real warrior. He padded proudly to Berrytail. She gasped.

"Wolfpaw! You've got blood everywhere. You need to see Blackfur," she hurried and brought him to the medicine den where a few other warriors had already gathered. "I was worried sick."

"I'm ok," assured Wolfpaw with a reassuring lick. "It was really fun. We thought them a lesson they'll never forget." Berrytail

seemed amused. Blackfur checked Wolfpaw then nodded.

"You've all got a few cuts and scrapes but it'll be fine," he reassured. "You just need some marigold and horsetail. Crowfang, you're going to need some cobwebs on that wound." Blackfur tended on Wolfpaw quickly then nodded for him to go to sleep.

"Get some rest now, you did well," he nodded solemnly. Wolfpaw and Berrytail padded to the apprentice den together and slipped in. Hawkpaw was sitting awake.

"Are you ok? What happened?" he eyed Wolfpaw anxiously were Marigold was applied.

"Fine, really. You should be asking Thunderclan, they're off way worse," smiled Wolfpaw. "I'm really tired. I'll tell you about it tomorrow." As Wolfpaw said this, he felt his brain sighing and his muscles felt tired and mushy. His adrenaline faded, he curled up and rested his head on his paws. He yawned and let his muscles relax. Berrytail kissed him goodnight and padded out.

Ch. 16

Wolfpaw yawned and blinked his eyes open. Sunlight filtered into the den. He looked around but Hawkpaw wasn't there. He shook himself, his body felt tense and throbbed. Painfully, he got up and out of the apprentice den. He looked at the group of cats gathered in front of the High Rock. It was way past dawn. He spotted Willowflight who beckoned him over. He sat beside her, at the edge of the gathered group of cats.

"Because of the battle yesterday, you're supposed to rest for a few days, just like me and the rest of the group who fought Thunderclan," WIllowflight explained. Wolfpaw nodded, relieved.

"What's going on now?" asked Wolfpaw.

"Lotusstar is going to do the ceremony for Dukkit, Volekit and Lilackit, I'm assuming," said Willowflight. "And then hopefully, he'll talk about what we're going to do about that log." Wolfpaw nodded, barely registering what his mentor was saying. Lotusstar started speaking. Wolfpaw was lost in thought

"Your mentor, Duskpaw, will be Ottercry," Lotusstar declared. Wolfpaw forced himself to listen. "Lilacpaw, your mentor shall be Palestorm." Palestorm and Ottercry leapt onto the High Rock and touched noses with Duskpaw and Lilacpaw.

"Volepaw, as you wanted, you will be learning to be a medicine cat. Your mentor shall be Blackfur," declared Lotusstar. A few excited murmurs broke out. Wolfpaw stifled a yawn and shook himself. His body groaned at the effort. All cats started cheering and whooping the new apprentice's names. Wolfpaw sighed, they would be sleeping in the apprentice den now, with Hawkpaw and him. He had liked it being private. After the howls died down, Lotusstar beckoned Brambleheart to his side.

"As you all must know, yesterday, we confronted

Thunderclan," boomed Brambleheart. "We won!" He let it soak in as cats jumped up and down and howled.

"Riverclan!" shouted the cats in unison. Lotusstar flicked his tail and all cats returned silent.

"They will not mess with us again," Lotusstar noted. "But now we need to push the log away. We will need the strongest cats. We will be doing it right after this gathering. The cats who will help will be, Badgerfang, Lionheart, Lightningcloud, Stormfire, Finchjump, Clovercreek, Brambleheart and I." Lotusstar leapt off followed by Brambleheart and they headed for the camp entrance. Most cats returned to the fresh-kill pile or to their dens while the chosen warriors crowded near Lotusstar.

"You know, since you're not going to be doing anything for a few days," Willowflight thought aloud. "You should go follow them. Don't interfere just watch them. Sometimes just watching is the best way to learn. Go on, before they leave." Wolfpaw sighed and padded to the entrance just as Lionheart, the last cat, disappeared through it. He found them walking towards Thunderclan slowly. He trotted to catch up with them.

"What are you doing here Wolfpaw?" asked Brambleheart. "You can't help. You're supposed to rest and you're not strong enough. And it's dangerous."

"Willowflight said that since I won't be doing anything for a few days, I could just watch you," Wolfpaw explained. Lotusstar nodded.

"Good idea," he agreed. The patrol headed towards the fallen tree slowly, joking and laughing on the way. Wolfpaw couldn't bring himself to tell any jokes but he listened intently on the warriors' remarks and comments. Finally, the log could be seen from far. They approached it a bit more and Lotusstar stopped the patrol with a flick of his tail.

"Wolfpaw, watch from here," he ordered. Wolfpaw obliged. He sat down then decided to relax and lay down on his stomach, watching the patrol approached the tree. They talked for a bit,

inspecting the tree and Wolfpaw felt his eyes closing. He drifted into the land of sleep.

Ch. 17

"Lotusstar!" shrieked a cat. Wolfpaw's eyes snapped open and he jolted awake. He jumped to his paws. He saw the patrol of cats, holding the tree, it was halfway into the water. And he saw Lotusstar, gripping the bottom of the log, in the middle of the river. His tail was touching the water and his hind legs were almost brushing against it. The tree looked about to fall into the river.

"Lotusstar, wait, I'm coming," Brambleheart cried. The other cats tried to push the tree away. Wolfpaw could only watch in terror. Lionheart stopped him.

"Don't! Any extra weight and the tree will fall in," he warned.

"Then how are we going to get him out?" cried Brambleheart, panicking.

"We need to push the tree back into place then you can help Lotusstar," Lionheart meowed. Brambleheart nodded numbly and helped the cats slowly push the tree. Wolfpaw could see that now that it was almost into the river, it was not coming out again. An idea popped into his head. He ran to the patrol of cats.

"I have an idea!" he cried.

"Go away Wolfpaw," hissed Brambleheart. "Don't disturb us." Wolfpaw took a step back hurt.

"What is your idea?" asked Lionheart instead. Wolfpaw brightened.

"I could go get Lotusstar, I'm light," he said. Brambleheart raised an eyebrow.

"You're not strong enough, move away," he growled.

"It's our only chance," Lionheart admitted. "We're never going to move this tree back to its original spot. Wolfpaw, we'll hold it from falling into the water but you need to climb to Lotusstar.

"NO," yelled Lotusstar. "I don't want an apprentice risking his life." Lotusstar had a defiant glare and his claws still hung to the branch. Wolfpaw saw there was no way he would be able to climb up without assistance. Wolfpaw leapt onto the log, ignoring Lotusstar.

"It's an order Wolfpaw!" Lotusstar boomed loudly. "Get down."

"It's the only way," mumbled Wolfpaw mostly to himself. He gulped as he looked down at the rushing water beneath him.

"I'm almost there," Wolfpaw yelled. Brambleheart watched, eyes twitching. Wolfpaw was in the middle of the log. Wolfpaw bent down carefully, latching his claws onto the bark and leaned his head over the edge. Water droplets hit him. He opened his mouth and latched onto Lotusstar's scruff. He tried pulling him up. Lotusstar tried a mad scramble to get up but it didn't work. Lotusstar almost fell.

"No Wolfpaw!" shouted Brambleheart. "Not like that! You need to grab his scruff then put your paw out so he can climb up." Wolfpaw could hardly hear with the water rushing under them.

"Wolfpaw!" Brambleheart shouted exasperated. "WOLFPAW!" Wolfpaw couldn't hear and was not listening. In a burst of frustration and anger, Brambleheart leapt onto the tree to do it himself. The log lurched and the cats holding it were pushed back. Brambleheart flailed his legs and leapt away just as the tree, Lotusstar and Wolfpaw fell into the water. He landed safely on the bank. Wolfpaw was engulfed by cold water. He felt it go into his ears and he felt himself being pushed in a strong turbulent of water. He felt his side hit something hard and he wanted to moan in distress. He could hear the roaring of the water in his ears. Finally finding sense, he pushed to the surface. He saw the flash of pelts running alongside the bank. He was being pushed with the current away and away. He felt it pull him under and drag him away. He

knew there was nothing he could do. Just hope Starclan knew what was best. Suddenly, a cat grabbed his scruff and he was gasping for air. Lotusstar had a hold of him. They were still being pulled by the current but at least they could breath. They narrowly missed a large rock. Lotusstar paddled furiously. He was the best swimmer but even he could not swim against this current. As they were being dragged away, Lotusstar brought Wolfpaw nearer and nearer to the bank.

"Go Wolfpaw. You can do this. Swim to the bank," murmured Lotusstar in his ear. Wolfpaw suddenly felt energy return to him. He pushed harder with Lotusstar helping him. Wolfpaw felt himself brush against the bank but didn't have time to scramble up. A rock loomed in front of him. Suddenly, he was grabbed by the scruff and claws and teeth pulled him up. Lionheart, Clovercreek and Lightningcloud let go of him. Brambleheart had leapt to the side to grab Lotusstar. But suddenly, the current pulled him under and he disappeared. Wolfpaw watched in terror, waiting for Lotusstar head to reappear. The warriors ran along the river but soon, it was clear he was not coming back. Wolfpaw shivered, wet, cold and afraid. Lotusstar... Lotusstar? He choked. The patrol returned to him, dim and solemn. Brambleheart swished his tail angrily and muttered under his breath. He stalked away. Lionheart and Stormfire helped Wolfpaw to his feet and the other warriors walked by him, telling him soothing words. They finally went into the tunnel and Wolfpaw collapsed on the ground.

"Blackfur!" he heard a cat howl.

Ch. 18

The strong scent of warmth and love. Wolfpaw opened his eyes. He was in the apprentice den. Berrytail lay by him. Her eyes went open when she saw him awake. She leaned near him.

"Wolfpaw, are you alright? Oh Wolfpaw," she murmured softly. Tears brimmed in her eyes. Wolfpaw wrapped his tail around her. He felt... fresh. But he knew he shouldn't be feeling that. Something horrible had happened. Another cat rushed into the den. Wolfpaw sniffed. It was Hawkpaw.

"Wolfpaw, thank Starclan you're awake!" gasped Hawkpaw, nuzzling Wolfpaw gentling. "Are you feeling ok?"

"I don't know...," Wolfpaw trailed off. His brother and mother looked at him with worry.

"What's the matter? Does it hurt? Do you need Blackfur?" asked Berrytail.

"No. I mean, I feel fine. I feel great," Wolfpaw said. "But I shouldn't be feeling great, should I? What happened?"

"Lotusstar is dead," Hawkpaw whispered, dropping his head. Berrytail looked down at her paws. "He drowned. Brambleheart set off before sunset to go get his nine lives with Lionheart. Blackfur stayed here in case you needed him."

"It was my fault," muttered Wolfpaw. He choked. How could this be happening? Lotusstar had been the leader for his whole life.

"It wasn't. The whole patrol agreed..., except...," Hawkpaw didn't finish. Wolfpaw nodded at him.

"Except what?" Wolfpaw asked, brow furrowed. Berrytail swallowed a sob and looked into Wolfpaw's eyes.

"Except Brambleheart," she murmured. "He was so angry. He

said it was your fault. You didn't do it properly." Wolfpaw felt as if something had clawed at his heart. It felt as if it was ripping to pieces.

"But it wasn't your fault," Hawkpaw assured. "I know it wasn't. You were just trying to help."

"Yes, you were only trying to help," Berrytail agreed. Wolfpaw nodded and closed his eyes. He wanted to sink into the ground. He wanted to disappear.

"Do you need rest?" asked Hawkpaw.

"Are you hungry?" asked Berrytail. Wolfpaw gulped down the cries pushing up his throat. He tried to push down the feeling of hurt. Because he knew at last that the void he had always felt between him and his father was not just some void because they didn't speak often. Brambleheart hated him. He had always hated him.

Ch. 19

Wolfpaw swam at great speed after Willowflight. He made little noise and he moved swiftly. She leapt out of the water and onto the bank just as he reached out to bite her tail.

"Too slow," she said sternly. He grumbled and got out, shaking his pelt.

"I almost did it," he mumbled but he knew almost was not enough.

"That's not good enough," she scolded then relented. "But I think you're a good swimmer and I think it's time for you to swim at the river." Wolfpaw bounced excitedly after her. They trekked to the river in the middle of their territory. Here, the current was not too strong but it did pull a cat away.

"Right, fishing in the river is not the same as fishing in the wetland," explained Willowflight. "So when you see a fish, you will put your paw in a scoop like this, claws out, and flick it out of the water. It must be a quick movement. Like we practiced yesterday and today." Wolfpaw nodded and did the movement.

"Good, then, when it flies onto land you just kill it. Now, after you do this, we're going to try the swimming technique. This one is easier but less fish are going to come to the banks so you must be patient. Come, lie next to me." Wolfpaw settled himself next to Willowflight. They watched the water intently. Wolfpaw tried not to get bored. He fixed his eyes on the clear water, looking for anything silver. Suddenly, he saw a flash of silver and tried to knock it out of the water. It darted away. Willowflight, next to him, made the movement, quick and swiftly. There was a splash and Wolfpaw was momentarily blinded then he opened his eyes and Willowflight was crouched with a fish in her mouth.

"You flicked it out and *caught* it?" gaped Wolfpaw.

"Yes, and you missed," she noted. "Go into the water. We'll try fishing while swimming. WE practiced in the wetlands."

"Alright," nodded Wolfpaw. He jumped into the cold water but puffed his fur up. He swam, not letting the current pull him too far. But he was drifting away. Willowflight padded on the bank beside him.

"Alright, it's up to you now," Willowflight said. "This will be your last time swimming in the river this season as leaf-bare is almost here and it will freeze over and the fish will go." Wolfpaw nodded. He saw a fish and swam towards it. It darted away through his paws but he used Willowflight's technique and squeeze his back legs together, digging his claws out to try and trap the fish. As he predicted it tried to swim through his hind legs and got stuck. He stuck his claws into its flesh and took it out. He dragged it to Willowflight, beaming proudly.

"Very good. Impressing even," she smiled. "You did it your first try. Let's do it again." And he did. Wolfpaw tried the swimming and fishing method many times more then the scooping and flicking the fish out of the water many more times. He did it again and again. Practice makes perfect.

Ch. 20

"You are to catch as much prey as you can with Hawpaw. You have till sunhigh," Willowflight said. It was the middle of leaf-bare and there was a gentle blanket of snow covering the ground. The river was still running although it was freezing cold but the wetlands had frozen. Hawkpaw stood, fidgeting next to Wolfpaw. Salmontail and Willowflight padded away.

"Great so how do we do this? Everytime I walk on snow, it makes a crunching noise," Hawkpaw rolled his eyes. "Why can't we have the test in greenleaf?" Wolfpaw ignored his brothers complains. He pricked his ear. He heard the call of a robin near them. It came from a tree. He had climbed trees before although only for fun, Riverclan cats didn't climb trees. Lotusstar's death had been mourned for four moons. Bramblestar had led the clan bravely through leaf-fall. He had been to busy to talk to Wolfpaw but he always seemed to have time for Hawkpaw. Not that Wolfpaw cared. Wolfpaw flicked his ear and crouched. He crept slowly towards the robing. He lift each paw up gently, making sure not to make noise with the snow. After agonisingly long minutes, he reached the tree of the robin. It fluttered on a branch. Wolfpaw had no idea how he was going to climb up the tree without the bird noticing. He thought for a moment, keeping his grey-white pelt pushed close to the ground. He hoped Hawkpaw wouldn't follow him. His light tabby pelt was easily seen. Wolfpaw thought hard. He could find no easy way of getting to the robin before it flew away but he needn't worry. The robin solved his problem for him. It flew down to the ground, oblivious to Wolfpaw and started pecking through the snow. Wolfpaw grinned and stalked forward. He fixed his eyes on the robin, seeing every little detail and making out each of its feathers. He pounced. Paws stretched out, claws unsheathed. The robin had no time to open its wings. It was caught in Wolfpaw's claws and he bit down on its neck. He dropped the dead bird to the ground with a satisfied look.

"Nice one," commented Hawkpaw, trotting to him.

"I don't know how you're going to hunt," sighed Wolfpaw. "Your pelt can be seen from one hundred fox lengths away."

"I know, it sucks doesn't it? Technically, I shouldn't even be taking the test," sulked Hawpaw. It was true. Bramblestar had made a new announcement that any cat who was white or grey or able to blend into the snow had to only take border patrols and others who could blend in would do all the hunting. This meant only Wolfpaw, Salmontail, Snowflame, Silverfish, Stormfire, Lilypool and Willowflight could hunt. Seven cats to hunt for the whole clan.

"Remind me again why you're still taking it," growled Wolfpaw.

"Because Bramblestar insisted I took it with you because it wouldn't be fair if, and I quote "Wolfpaw passes but not you"," Hawkpaw said. Wolfpaw sniffled and snarled. He hated Bramblestar. He knew Bramblestar hated him too. He felt himself bristled with hate for his father.

"You can't still be mad at him," Hawkpaw said.

"What do you mean?" asked Wolfpaw.

"For blaming you for Lotusstar's death," Hawkpaw said.

"He killed Lotusstar, and almost killed me. He knew the tree was going to fall with the extra weight," snapped Wolfpaw.

"I know but he just forgot. He didn't mean it."

"Maybe, but he sure meant it when he was hissing in my face that I had killed Riverclan's leader."

"Come on, let's just hunt." Wolfpaw grudgingly nodded and followed his brother towards the wetland. They had found out that many mice loved to go there. A cold breeze blew but Wolfpaw fluffed up his fur to protect himself. Together, they started to hunt.

Willowflight and Salmontail were waiting in the clearing as they had planned. It was sunhigh and hot for leafbare. Hawkpaw and Wolfpaw trotted towards them with a robin, thrush, two mice and a

vole clamped in their jaws.

"Very nice," noted Salmontail as they deposited their catch in front of them.

"Wolfpaw, you did very well, especially in the beginning, when you caught that robin," Willowflight praised. Wolfpaw's eyes widened.

"You *saw* that?" he asked.

"Yes of course, we told you we were watching you," said Willowflight.

"And you Hawkpaw, despite not being able to blend in you still helped catch the prey that Wolfpaw stalked and chased to you," nodded Salmontail approvingly.

"Yes!" the siblings cried and grinned at each other.

"It is not over. Since the river is freezing and the wetland is frozen, we won't be doing the usual swimming test but we already know you are both very competent and great swimmers, now we're on to battle," said Willowflight.

"Right, come on, face each other. Claws sheathed. And fight," Salmontail said. The mentors parted and walked to the side. Wolfpaw faced Hawkpaw. Hawkpaw leapt first. Wolfpaw dodged and lashed out as Hawkpaw landed on the ground. Hawkpaw was unbalanced but only for a second and reared up to bring his paws down at Wolfpaw. Wolfpaw darted away and thrust himself at Hawkpaw. They fell to the ground, the snow flew around them as they rolled around. Wolfpaw finally managed to pin Hawkpaw down but Hawkpaw bit into Wolfpaw's paw. Wolfpaw leapt away and Hawkpaw went for a front paw blow. He hit Wolfpaw on the head and he almost lost balance. His sight went fuzzy but only for a second. This wasn't enough time for Hawkpaw who didn't have time to act. Wolfpaw went for an explosive back kick and Hawkpaw tumbled to the ground. Although the air was cold, both Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw were burning and warm. Salmontail walked up and helped Hawkpaw up.

"Very good," smiled Willowflight. "Let's see your observation skills then we can go back."

Ch. 21

Wolfpaw shot after Hawkpaw. They raced towards the Thunderpath, wind whistling past their faces. Wolfpaw gained speed as he ran swiftly through the trees, streaking in front of Hawkpaw. He was a blur of grey. Hawkpaw halted before he reached open space but Wolfpaw continued and stopped suddenly were there was a dip in the grass. He lay on his stomach and his eyes sparkled at Hawkpaw. Hawkpaw huffed and joined him.

"Win again brother," he teased.

"Whatever," Hawkpaw rolled his eyes. "I don't care. Plus, I let you." Wolfpaw laughed.

"How do you think you did on the test?" asked Wolfpaw.

"Fine I guess, I mean, I don't think I did *that* bad," sighed Hawkpaw. "It could have been worse."

"Yeah," shrugged Wolfpaw.

"I can't believe we might become warriors and Bramblestar will be the ones who make us warriors. Our own father," Hawkpaw's eyes gleamed. Wolfpaw harrumphed.

"Whatever. He's a flea bag. His stupid rules keep you from hunting," spat Wolfpaw.

"Wolfpaw, he's your father," Hawkpaw said, not understanding.

"Yes but he hates me," Wolfpaw's tail lashed.

"How do you know?"

"I just know."

"It's all in your head Wolfpaw. Stop making things up to

yourself. Just cos he doesn't have much time right now. Don't worry, he's just settling into the job." Wolfpaw didn't argue with Hawkpaw, he cast his gaze down.

"Maybe we should go back. Maybe the ceremony is starting soon," suggested Wolfpaw. Hawkpaw agreed and they made their way back to camp.

Ch. 22

Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw slipped into the clearing and Willowflight bounded up to them.

"We talked to Bramblestar," she said, nodded then stalked off.

"Really?" huffed Wolfpaw. They were about to go back to their dens when Bramblestar jumped to the High Rock. Lionheart paced to the edge of the rock. Wolfpaw felt his heart shine. Lionheart was the greatest deputy of all time. He was generous, kind and strong and brave. Wolfpaw wished he was leader instead of Bramblestar. Bramblestar, was, in a way careless and Wolfpaw had a feeling it would lead to the downfall of Riverclan. He pushed the dark thought bubbling in the back of his mind away and concentrated.

"All cats old enough to fish in the river come to the High Rock for a Gathering," called Bramblestar. All cats gathered around. "Today is a good day. We celebrate the coming of two new warriors." Bramblestar beckoned to Wolfpaw and Hawkpaw. They both bounded to the High Rock, shaking with excitement.

"I, Bramblestar, leader of Riverclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn," Bramblstar announced. "Hawkpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and protect your Clan, even at the cost of your life?" Hawkpaw nodded.

"I do," Hawkpaw said, voice shaking slightly.

"Then," Bramblestar wavered, his eyes shining bright with pride and love to Hawkpaw. "By the powers of Starclan, i give you your warrior name, Hawkcloud. Starclan honours your bravery, ambition and kindness. We welcome you as a full warrior of Riverclan." Hawkcloud puffed his chest out with pride and

Bramblestar bent down and gave him a quick lick on the ear.

"Step out Wolfpaw, don't be shy," smield Bramblestar. Wolfpaw took a step forward. "Wolfpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior cod and protect your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do," Wolfpaw replied with a strong, unwavering voice.

"Then by the powers of Starclan, i give you your warrior name, Wolfclaw. Starclan honours your strength, determination and courage and we welcome you as a full warrior of Riverclan," announced Bramblestar.

"Wolfclaw!"

"Hawkcloud!" Wolfclaw and Hawkcloud glanced at each other, bright smiles on their faces. Oakfur and his mate, Ottercry bounded up to Wolfclaw to congratulate him. Wolfclaw was a warrior.

Ch. 23

Wolfclaw thrashed. Where was he? No not again. He saw him, Lotusstar. Lotusstar falling into the water, eyes wide and claws unsheathed. He batted at the waves tugging him under and away. Wolfclaw tried to grab him, tried to hold him but his fur slipped from his grasp. He saw Lotusstar' mouth open once more. He seemed to mouth "unworthy" "destroy" and "overthrow". Wolfclaw shivered. The last word tugged at his gut. It had meaning. He felt his heart beat faster and faster. It felt as if it was about to burst out of his chest.

Wolfclaw's eyes snapped open. He was panting hard and his claws were gripping onto the ground. He looked around. A dim light shone into the warriors den. Everyone was asleep. Silently, panting slightly and sweating, Wolfclaw crept out and into the early light of the morning. He heard the kits in the nursery crying. He felt bad for Dusklight, being awaken so early by the kits. He saw Silentwhisker slipping into the den to join his mate. Wolfclaw had settled well into warrior life. He had been a warrior for almost twelve moons now. Enough for life to progress. Voletooth had become a medicine cat and Blackfur continued to argue against becoming an elder. Bramblestar had tired of trying to convince him and had let him be. Wolfclaw flexed his claws and heard Lilacsong slip next to him. She pressed her pelt to his.

"You alright?" she asked. "You've been waking early these past few days."

"Better to star hunting early," grinned Wolfclaw dimly. Lionheart padded to them, a smile on his face.

"Are you leading the hunting patrol?" he asked Wolfclaw.

"If you say so," Wolfclaw shrugged. He felt the warmth from Lilacsong's pelt against him.

"Good then," Lionheart nodded. Wolfclaw turned to

Lilacsong.

"Gonna get the cats," he smiled.

"I'm coming," she said sternly and padded to the camp entrance. Wolfclaw smiled, amused and trotted into the warrior den. He saw Berrytail's greying fur at the end of the den and crept to her side. He shoved her gently.

"Berrytail. I'm leading a hunting patrol. Wanna come?" Wolfclaw whispered. Berrytail opened one eye. They shone when she saw him and she got up. She slunk out of the den, nodding. Wolfclaw scanned the room and saw Hawkcloud curled in a ball. Grinning evily, he went over and spat into Hawkcloud's ear. Hawkcloud bounced up and shook himself. His eyes darted around, scared for a moment.

"Oh it's you," he huffed slightly amused. "What do you want?"

"Come on lazy elder, hunting patrol," Wolfclaw led Hawkcloud out to the camp entrance where Berrytail and Lilacsong were waiting.

"Oh so it's a family reunion," Hawkcloud huffed amused. "Should I go get Bramblestar too?" Wolfclaw batted his ear playfully.

"Not funny," Wolfclaw said angrily. He wrapped his tail around Lilacsong's and they slipped out of camp followed by Berrytail then a lazy Hawkcloud.

Ch. 24

Wolfclaw leapt and felt his claws sink into the plump pigeon. Lilacsong slipped out of the bracken.

"Nice one," she praised.

"Thanks," muttered Wolfclaw with his mouth full. They joined the others after digging up the rest of their prey and headed back to camp. It had been a good hunt. Hawheart carried two mice in his mouth, Berrytail had caught a shrew and a thrush, Lilacsong had caught two more mice and Wolfclaw clung his pigeon and shrew tightly in his mouth. They slipped into the tunnel and dropped their prey into the fresh-kill pile. Tigerleaf walked up to them and congratulated them. Lilypool praised them as well. Suddenly, there was a call for Blackfur and Voletooth.

"It's Clovercreek! She's kitting" shouted Badgerfang, her mate. Wolfclaw dropped what he was doing and raced to the nursery. Voletooth and Blackfur brushed past him. He peeked inside. Badgerfang slipped in. Dusklight was keeping her kits from making noise. They were aching to ask questions but she managed to keep them quiet. Wolfclaw wanted to help badly.

"Should I take the kits?" asked Wolfclaw. "So they don't disturb you?" Voletooth nodded quickly.

"Yes, yes," Voletooth replied gruffly. Badgerfang watched in horror as Clovercreek wriggled with pain on the floor. Dusklight pushed her kits towards Wolfclaw. They trotted up to him gladly. He led them away. Ravenkit, the smallest of the kits, hung back but finally followed Wolfclaw. Brightkit and Orangekit bounded in front of Wolfclaw. He brought them to the stream down the slope. He remembered when Berrytail used to bring him here. He had loved it and hoped the kits did too. Brightkit approached the water cautiously. Her light orange pelt bristled slightly. Orangekit's bright orange pelt fluffed up when he dipped a paw into the water.

"It's so cold," he shivered. Wolfclaw laughed. He was surprised the stream hadn't frozen over yet.

"Yes, it's the middle of leaf-bare," Wolfclaw said. Mousekit hung back. He looked nothing like his littermates. He had a light grey-brown pelt and was reluctant to join his littermates in anything.

"Will we freeze if we go in?" asked Mousekit.

"No, you're not going in," Wolfclaw replied sternly. "It's too cold and I think Dusklight will want to teach you how to swim herself. Come on, gather around and I'll show you a fighting move." Lilacsong slipped next to Wolfclaw. He almost jumped in surprise.

"Lilacsong!" he cried. "Hey, I was just going to teach them a fighting move." Wolfclaw demonstrated the move and let the kits copy him. He corrected them a few times and finally, Orangekit and Brightkit got it right and howled in victory. Lilacsong smiled.

"You're so good with kits," she purred.

"I'll be even better with *our* kits," smiled Wolfclaw. Lilacsong licked him affectionately. They watched the kits play for a while until Voletooth came to get them reluctantly. He was grumpy and huffed that he had better things to do.

"Clovercreek kitted and Dusklight wants her kits back," he huffed and marched away, muttering under his breath. Wolfclaw glanced at Lilacsong excitedly.

"I wonder what they called them," Wolfclaw said. They trotted to the nursery with the three kits stumbling behind them. Clovercreek was watching two kits at her belly with pride while Badgerfang lay next to her, smiling with love. Dusklight smiled at her kits and beckoned them over with her tail. They gazed in wonder at the newborn kits. Wolfclaw pressed his pelt nearer to Lilacsong.

"Wow, they're beautiful," she gasped. Clovercreek smiled. Her white and cream fur was clung together by sweat.

"Thank you," she breathed. "We named this one Softkit." She nodded at the cream coloured kit nearest to her then nudged the other lovingly. "And this one is Beetlekit." Beetlekit was black all over except for his belly.

"Congratulations, they're healthy and beautiful," Wolfclaw dipped his head.

"Thank you," Badgerfang answered. Silently, Wolfclaw and Lilacsong retreated. One of the newest apprentices, Leafpaw, bounded up to Wolfclaw and Lilacsong.

"I heard Clovercreek kitted!" she cried. "Can I go see them? What are their names? How many are there?"

"No you cannot see them," snapped a grumpy voice. It was Voletooth. He was headed to the nursery to check on Clovercreek.

"Oh," huffed Leafpaw in disappointment.

"Hey," Lilacsong cheered, "It's alright. There are two of them. One is cream furred, almost like Clovercreek! Her name is Softkit and the other is all black except for his belly, his name is Beetlekit."

"Thanks!" exclaimed Leafpaw. "I have to tell Stonepaw and Briarpaw." She leapt away to the apprentice den. Just then, Owltooth stumbled into the clearing. She huffed angrily, fluffing her pelt.

"What's wrong?" asked Palestorm, bounding to her side. He helped her up. Lilacsong skipped to Owltooth's side.

"Blackfur!" called Wolfclaw. Blackfur appeared out of the medicine den. He look flustered.

"What is it now?" he barked.

"It's Owltooth," Wolfclaw said. Blackfur crept to her side.

"Honestly, I'm fine," she assured them.

"No you're not, you're obviously weak," Blackfur snapped. He

ordered Lilacsong and Palestrom to bring her into his den. Wolfclaw padded away, knowing there was nothing he could do. He padded over to Lionheart who smiled at him.

"I'm leading a border patrol. Do you want to come? Oh. you already went on that hunting patrol. Good job by the way," Lionheart said.

"No, it's alright. I'll come," Wolfclaw said. Lionheart shrugged and nodded. Salmontail, Silverfish and Oakfur were waiting for them at the entrance. They slipped quietly out and towards Thunderclan border.

Ch. 25

Wolfclaw sat next to Lilacsong. Bramblestar stood at the High Rock.

"Owltooth has decided her time serving the Clan as a warrior is over," Bramblestar announced, he beckoned her forward. "Is it your wish to give up the name of a warrior and go to join the elders?"

"It is," Owltooth nodded. Oakfur watched her, his eyes glistening with tears.

"Your Clan honors you and all the service you have given to us. I call upon to give you many moons of rest." The clan shouted out Owltooth's name, to her embarrassment. Forestblaze went up to her and gave her a small lick on the ear.

"My mum, the old elder," he teased playfully.

"As you all know, Owltooth, had an apprentice. She is sad that she cannot continue to mentor her but she knows she will do well with the new mentor I have chosen for her. Briarpaw, although Owltooth must retired to the elder's den, it does not mean you must stop training. Hawkcloud, you are a loyal and brave cat and I trust you will do well in teaching Briarpaw everything you know." Briarpaw touched noses with Hawkcloud. Wolfclaw felt a stab of jealousy. He knew he was a better warrior. He had been waiting for an apprentice for twelve moons. He growled under his breath.

"What's wrong?" asked Lilacsong. "Aren't you happy for your brother?"

"Of course," Wolfclaw said. And he was. But he had a nagging feeling he might never get an apprentice as long as Bramblestar was the leader.

Lotusstar padded up to him. Wolfclaw shrunk back. Without a

word, Lotusstar turned his back on Wolfclaw and leapt into the river. Wolfclaw tried to follow but something was holding him back. It was Bramblestar.

"Bramblestar! Help him," Wolfclaw cried. "I need to help him. Let go of me!" Bramblestar glared at him.

"No, I will do it," he snapped. He looked for another way to help Lotusstar but the only way was to jump in. Wolfclaw knew he had to do it if Bramblestar wasn't willing to.

Wolfclaw awoke. It was cold and he shivered. He was in the warrior's den. Hawkcloud was slipping quietly out. He followed his littermate, cold and scared. Why did he keep having nightmares. Hawkcloud was heading for the apprentice den.

"Hey, Hawkcloud," called Wolfclaw. "Where are you going?"

"Going to wake Briarpaw," he said. "I'm going to take her out early." Wolfclaw sighed, remembering Hawkcloud's new responsibility. Not his.

"Hey, it's ok. I'm sure Bramblestar will make you mentor of one of Dusklight's kits," he soothed. Wolfclaw doubted it but didn't say anything he returned to the warriors' den, to rest. But he didn't want to sleep. He couldn't sleep. Not with Lotusstar and Bramblestar haunting his dreams.

Ch. 26

Wolfclaw needed to talk to Hawkcloud but everytime he wanted to, Hawkcloud was too busy with his apprentice. He huffed angrily, promising himself he would get to talk to Hawkcloud today. It was some time before dawn. He prodded Hawkcloud. He woke up with a snort.

"I need to talk to you," Wolfclaw said.

"What time is it?" asked Hawkcloud.

"Not dawn," replied Wolfclaw. Hawkcloud protested but Wolfclaw pulled him up. They walked towards the camp entrance. Bramblestar shook himself. He felt restless. He crept out of his den and spotted Wolfclaw and Hawkcloud padding out of Clan. He felt slightly curious but he knew there was nothing to be worried about. He jumped down from his den onto the High Rock. The dawn patrol would be going out soon, they would patrol the abandoned twoleg den and the Thunderpath. Bramblestar knew how Lotusstar had neglected those parts of the territory. He was not going to do the same.

Wolfclaw and Hawkcloud talked for a bit at their usual spot. They watched only one monster fly by them. The Thunderpath was quiet before dawn.

"Are you mad at Bramblestar for making me a mentor and not you?" asked Hawkcloud suddenly.

"Of course not," replied Wolfclaw.

"Really? Because it seems that when I'm suddenly better than you, you are sulking," Hawkcloud said.

"What do you mean?" snapped Wolfclaw. Hawkcloud fur rose. He hadn't meant it like that. He had just meant that he was finally better than his brother but Wolfclaw didn't want to admit it.

"Well, just because Bramblestar didn't choose you doesn't mean," Hawkcloud trailed off. Wolfclaw leapt to his feet. The words stung him as Hawkcloud didn't know anything. Hawkcloud didn't know of his dreams. Wolfclaw had been dying to tell him.

"Sorry," muttered Hawkcloud finally. "I hadn't meant it like that. What did you want to tell me?"

"I've been having dreams," admitted Wolfclaw. He felt his anger fading but was still aware of it, hiding. He hated Bramblestar. Wolfclaw told Hawkcloud everything.

"You've been having dreams about Bramblestar being a bad leader," Hawkcloud pointed out finally.

"Yes," agreed Wolfclaw.

"Just because he didn't choose you?" snarled Hawkcloud suddenly. "Just because he likes me more?"

"What do you mean?" growled Wolfclaw.

"You know what I mean. He likes me more than you. Maybe it's because I was meant to be a better warrior. A leader."

"That's not true!"

"Yes it is."

"You're just bitter because Berrytail never paid any attention to you."

"You're right! It was always Wolfclaw this, Wolfclaw that but now it's different! Now, I'm better. And Bramblestar knew it all along."

"Liar!"

"And in the end, the fact the Berrytail likes you more doesn't matter because the leader of the clan, Bramble*star*, likes *me* more. Jealous!"

"You idiot. I was always better than you but I never put you down for it. I was better at everything. I am better at everything. Bramblestar likes you but it doesn't matter to me, he's a bad leader. I've had dreams about him and I know the truth!"

"Dreams! Now you think of yourself as some stupid medicine cat! Your stupid dreams aren't real. You're just jealous."

"There's nothing to be jealous off, I will prove I am better. Right now." Wolflcaw leapt at Hawcloud. He felt his pelt bursting with anger. His brain was buzzing with rage. Bramblestar hated him. Bramblestar hated him. Bramblestar hated him! He reared up and slashed Hawkcloud on the snout. He backed away, tail lashing. Hawkcloud growled and pounced but Wolfclaw pushed him back. Hawkcloud's eyes clouded with doubt. Hawkcloud knew his brother was stronger. Wolfclaw made him back away, further and further. Wolfclaw kept coming nearer. They both stared at each other, gazes filled with anger and hatred. They minds buzzed with it so much they didn't notice the rumbling. Suddenly, something flashed before Wolfclaw, a blur of grey and a loud noise filled his head. It disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. Wolfclaw looked down, in the middle of the Thunderpath, Hawkcloud lay, blood pouring from a wound on his head and shoulder. His foot was pushed back in a disturbing position. Horror filled Wolfclaw. He sprang at his brother. He wasn't aware of the patrol which had arrived just in time to see the monster hit Hawkcloud. Wolfclaw pressed his muzzle against Hawkcloud's. Hawkcloud's eyes opened slightly.

"I'm sorry," he murmured. Wolfclaw pushed his head into Hawkcloud's fur.

"No no no no no. Don't go. I didn't meant anything I said," he begged. Hawkcloud's eyes flitted then he lay still. Wolfclaw sobbed, his body ached with pain and loss. Suddenly, something grabbed his scruff. Sharp teeth dug into his neck and pulled him away. He thought it was another cat, pulling him out of danger of the Thunderpath but suddenly, he felt blows on his muzzle. He rolled over in pain but the cat leapt at him and big into his shoulder. Wolfclaw shook him off. His brain was sluggish. He was still overwhelmed by the death of Hawkcloud. He turned to face his attacker. Bramblestar lashed his tail angrily, his eyes flashed.

"You murderer!" he screeched and launched himself on Wolfclaw. Wolfclaw stumbled back in surprise. He felt sharp claws digging into his back then the weight lifted off him.

"Bramblestar!" cried another voice. It was far away. Like an echo. Wolfclaw saw shapes, they turned darker and darker. Darkness.

Ch. 27

A sweet smell. Wolfclaw opened his eyes. He looked around. He was on a moss bed and the place smelt of herbs. He turned around, Lilacsong was pressed against him, eyes closed. He gently woke her up. Her eyes burst open and she looked shocked.

"Wolfclaw! You're awake!" she cried happily.

"What happened?" asked Wolfclaw. Her face turned somber.

"Hawkcloud is dead," she murmured. Wolfclaw remembered. He saw his brother's body lying dead on the floor. He felt his energy seeping.

"No...," he muttered. "how long?"

"Four days ago," she whispered. He put his head in his paws.

"Ah, you're awake. Good, well not so good but....," Voletooth appeared. "Your scratches are healed but that bite mark will only heal with time. Now, since you're alright, please leave." He nodded to Lilacsong who led Wolfclaw out. He stumbled slightly. Bright light burned his eyes and he blinked several times.

"Where's Blackfur?" asked Wolfclaw.

"He retired," explained Lilacsong. "Two days ago, after a lot of persuasion." Wolfclaw nodded.

"What did Voletooth mean?" asked Wolfclaw.

"Well...., Bramblestar said you killed him. He said you killed Hawkcloud. He's going to punish you," Lilacsong said, her voice broke.

"What..." Wolfclaw had no words. He didn't say anything. In his own territory, his own camp, he felt lost. He didn't want to go

back into the warriors den. Just then, cats started to appear and they gathered around him. Questions were thrown at him. A few sympathetic words, some snarls and then Bramblestar leapt onto the High Rock.

"All cats old enough to fish in the river please gather at the High Rock," he called. All cats gathered. Wolfclaw could see perfectly from where he stood and stayed put. Lilacsong stayed next to him. Berrytail appeared from the warrior's den. She rushed to Wolfclaw.

"Wolfclaw!" She cried. "My last kit..." Wolfclaw licked her gently and comfortingly. He didn't know what to say. He didn't know what was going on.

"Wolfclaw, for attacking your fellow Clanmate, Hawkcloud," Bramblestar declared. "And leading to his death, you are exiled. You are to take one piece of prey from the fresh-kill pile then say goodbye to your friends and then you will leave, never to return." There were gasps. Wolfclaw's heart sank. He didn't know what to do. He felt lost. He didn't know how this could be real.

"Once you leave, we will give you on sunrise to not come back. If you enter our territory and if we see you again, we will treat you as we would a Winclan cat or a rogue," Bramblestar said.

"But Bramblestar!" called out a cat. "He's your son."

"I have no more son!" snapped Bramblestar. "My only son died four days ago because of this murderer." Bramblestar spat and leapt off the rock. The cats sat in shocked silence. Berrytail hide her head in Wolfclaw's fur. He felt his body go cold. Lilacsong cried, collapsing to the floor.

"I have to go," he decided. "Goodbye Berrytail, this isn't the last time I'm seeing you." Berrytail nodded solemnly. At least he wasn't put to death.

"You are my son," she breathed. "My brave brave son." Wolfclaw smiled sadly. He would have felt sad that Bramblestar had rejected him as a son but he felt nothing. He glanced at Lilacsong

and pushed his mouth to her ear. He twirled his tail around hers. She was heaving and sobbing. It hurt his heart and he felt pure anger burn through him. He would have happily thrown Bramblestar on the Thunderpath. He pushed the anger down and pretended to be calm.

"I'm coming back," he promised. "And we're going to live happily together and have kits." Then he turned to his Clan. Bramblestar had retreated to his den, nothing more was to be said. Wolfclaw leapt to the High Rock to the astonishement of all the cats.

"I did not kill my brother. I was wrongfully accused," Wolfclaw announced. "And for that, I will come back and I will get revenge." He felt the anger burst through him and took a deep breath, relishing it. Bramblestar leapt onto the rock next to him and growled.

"Leave. Now," he growled. "Don't ever come back."

"Oh I will," assured Wolfclaw softly, "And when I do, you *will* feel my wrath."

Ch. 28

Wolfclaw snarled at Bramblestar and looked down at the cats below him. He had nothing to lose. He was already exiled, he couldn't see Lilacsong or Berrytail anymore, his brother had died and his father had disowned him. Riverclan cats looked at him from the High Rock in confusion but they knew deep down that he hadn't meant to kill his brother and this exile was not fair. Wolfclaw suddenly felt rage surge through him. He wanted to claw Bramblestar to death but he pushed his feelings down and pretended to act cool. Bramblestar nodded to Lionheart. Lionheart jumped onto the rock to escort Wolfclaw away but Wolfclaw shouldered him away. Lionheart lowered his head sadly. He did not want to see Wolfclaw leave. Wolfclaw jumped off the rock as Bramblestar barred his teeth. He flicked his tail at Lilacsong and Berrytail in goodbye and bounded out of camp. Wolfclaw ran through Riverclan territory till he reached the Thunderpath where his brother had died. He dipped his head in respect but felt at peace knowing his brother was hunting in Starclan now. He looked from side to side and listened carefully. There was no sound. He raced across the Thunderpath quickly and found himself on the other side of the Thunderpath. He was in territory of no Clan. He trotted into the forest carefully. The rustling of the leaves and the chirping of the birds unnerved him. *It's all the same*, he told himself. He didn't know where he was going, all he knew was that he would save Riverclan from Bramblestar. As he made his way through the forest, he felt more confident. There was nothing holding him back now. He was free, although he would return to his Clanmates, he would return to Riverclan. Finally, the trees parted and he looked down. He was standing on the top of a hill, gazing down at a long stretch of grass below him and Twoleg dens. He had always wondered about Twoleg dens and kittypets. It was time he found out more about them. He started down the hill, feeling the breeze on his whiskers. It felt great. He thought about Berrytail and Lilacsong..., and Hawkcloud. He felt a stab of homesickness and sadness. He wanted to lie down, curl into a ball and stay that way but he forced himself to go on. He reached a fence which was low enough to jump over. It

was grey and had holes in it. Wolfclaw laughed to himself, Twoleg's were stupid. He leapt over and landed on the soft grass. He sniffed, these Twolegs didn't have kittypets. He jumped over another fence and into another Twoleg's territory.

"Who are you?" barked a voice. Wolfclaw smelt a cat. He looked right. Sitting near the Twoleg den was a big fluffy cream and brown coloured cat. He had a red colour on his neck and long whiskers. He was crouched in an unbalanced way and he barred his teeth. Wolfclaw almost burst out laughing. This was exactly how he had imagined a kittypet to be but eh just couldn't believe his eyes.

"What are you laughing at?" growled the cat indignantly.

"What are you doing?" Wolfclaw asked, on the verge of laughter.

"I'm I'm going to attack you if you don't tell me what you're doing here," said the cat.

"Go on," urged Wolfclaw. He unsheathed his claws and snarled. His tail lashed out and he crouched, ready to pounce. He watched the cats every move. He saw the tom twitch his whiskers, shuffle on his paws nervously and his tail flickered with slight fear.

"Well..., I er, I need to go," sputtered the cat. Wolfclaw leapt at him. He pushed him to the ground easily and pinned him down.

"Where do you need to go?" he asked.

"No-no where," stammered the cat. Wolfclaw jumped off the cat.

"What's your name?" he asked the cat, sitting down and licking his paw. The cat watched Wolfclaw with a look of surprise.

"Onyx," replied the cat. Wolfclaw frowned.

"That's a weird name," he said making a face.

"What's yours?" asked Onyx cautiously.

"I'm Wolfclaw of Riverclan," announced Wolfclaw proudly.

"Riverclan?" Onyx gaped.

"Yes, *Riverclan,*" repeated Wolfclaw.

"I didn't know the clan really existed," cried Onyx. "I've wanted to meet one fo the Clan cats forever. I want to be a warrior. I want to be the leader. I'd be Onyxstar!" Wolfclaw raised his eyebrows.

"Really?" was all Wolfclaw could manage.

"Yes!" cried Onyx. "Why are you here? Are you here to recruit me? I'd be willing. I mean, I can't hunt but I'd learn and I know a few fighting moves and-"

"No, I'm not here to recruit you," Wolfclaw broke in. "I'm here because I was exiled. But I'm going to get revenge. And I need some cats to help me."

"I could!" piped in Onyx.

"No you couldn't," Wolfclaw said. "Not at all."

"But...," Onyx trailed off.

"But nothing, now leave me alone," said Wolfclaw before slipping away quietly. He went into the garden of another Twoleg's house. He walked till sunset, slipping through dark alleyways, trying to find his way around. He was about to turn right when something creaked behind him. His ears pricked and he turned around. He was aware of his surroundings. He smelt the cat.

"Come out, I know you're there," he growled. There was no answer. Wolfclaw lashed his tail. "Come out! I can hear and smell you!" A fluffy cat appeared for the shadows. It was Onyx.

"Oh not you again!" grumbled Wolfclaw, turning tail.

"You can't go there!" cried Onyx.

"And why not?" Wolfclaw said indignant.

"That's where the alleycats live," whispered Onyx, looking around fearfully.

"I'm not scared," Wolfclaw assured Onyx. Onyx opened his mouth to protest but a cat appeared behind Wolfclaw. She had a golden pelt and glowing passive brown eyes. They gave off one word "threat". Wolfclaw wanted to back away but stood his ground. It was just another kittypet afterall.

"My my my," she smiled sweetly. "What do we have here?" Onyx backed away, ears twitching.

"N-nothing," he stammered.

"Nothing? This doesn't seem like nothing to me. Seems like somebody is trespassing," she growled and without warning leapt at Wolfclaw, claws extended. Wolfclaw ducked and cried out as her claw dug into his shoulder. Grimacing, he faced her and leapt at her. He bit into her shoulder and as she turned to claw at him, he flipped her over and tore at her belly. She howled in pain. She managed to slip out of his grasp and nip his ear but he clawed her neck and as she jumped for him, he ducked and bit into her tail. She whipped it out of his mouth, gaze filled with hate. Then she swiped her claws at his face. He could have been blinded but he staggered back just in time. Panting, he leapt at her, keeping low so she couldn't intercept him. She didn't expect him to and stumbled back. He bit into her muzzle, keeping her mouth shut. Her eyes widened in fear and pain. She tried to claw at him but he only bit in harder and finally, she slumped to the ground. She law feeble, barely moving but Wolfclaw knew she would soon be alright. He raced away down the alley and saw two eyes watching him. He growled but saw it was only the stupid kittypet and continued his way.

"That was awesome!" cried Onyx. "Did you kill her?" Wolfclaw ignored him as they turned into a Twoleg garden.

"How did you learn to fight like that? Can you teach me? She was so scared! You really taught her a lesson," continued Onyx

when Wolfclaw didn't answer. He finally snapped.

"Shut up!" he fumed. Onyx closed his mouth. They continued walking on endlessly.

"You don't know where you're going do you?" Onyx finally said. Wolfclaw glared at him although he was right. Wolfclaw was searching for a place where he could find shelter without any Twoleg's or dog seeing him, or Onyx. "You can stay at mine." Wolfclaw pricked his ear. He was tired and hungry. His ear was hurting from the fight with the kittypet and the scratches on his side were aching and burning. He sighed. One night wouldn't do anything.

"Fine," agreed Wolfclaw reluctantly. Onyx's eyes lit up and he bounded down a street. Wolfclaw followed him more silently. Finally, they slipped under a high wooden fence and up a few grey steps. Wolfclaw sniffed, suspicious. Onyx went through a sort of flap in the wall of the Twoleg den. Wolfclaw prodded it with his paw and it opened. Uncertain, he put one paw in, then the other. Then he slipped in quietly. Inside, many smells filled Wolfclaw's nose. He smelt warm sweet food and he smelt Twoleg's. Onyx was walking down a sort of hall. He beckoned Wolfclaw forward. They turned into another room in the Twoleg den.

"This is where my housefolk hang out most of the time," informed Onyx. Wolfclaw approached it with caution and went into the room. There were so many big and weird things. Sitting on a big soft object was a Twoleg. He spotted Onyx and said something softly. onyx went up to him and rubbed his pelt against the Twoleg's leg, purring. Wolfclaw watched in amazement. Then the Twoleg saw Wolfclaw and started muttering a string of words. Wolfclaw felt suddenly scared. He backed away hissing. The Twoleg got up abruptly and started walking towards Wolfclaw. He was saying incoherent words. Wolfclaw backed away, feeling threatened and scared. He snarled angrily, his fur bristling.

"Hey," Onyx said. "He's going to help you. Stop hissing. He's nice." Wolfclaw doubted it but he let his fur settle and let the growl slowly fade from his throat. It took a lot of courage to stay planted on the spot as the Twoleg reached one of its big paws up to him and

touched his ear were it hurt. Wolfclaw felt pain flare through him and in a flash, nipped the hand of the Twoleg and ran to hide underneath the big soft thing the Twoleg had been sitting on. The Twoleg howled in pain and spat a few words. Onyx padded to Wolfclaw.

"You didn't need to do that, he was just trying to help. Also, sleeping underneath the sofa isn't very comfortable. Why don't you come with me to my bed?" asked Onyx. Wolfclaw didn't want to get out of the protection go the "sofa" and stayed put. He pushed his head on his paws and closed his eyes. The Twoleg had left him alone and was pacing about the room. Wolfclaw closed his eyes, the ground was hard but not cold or uncomfortable. Wolfclaw felt himself slipping into darkness with the stead deep steps of the Twoleg in his mind.

Ch. 29

Wolfclaw yawned and hit his head. He groaned and looked up, he was under some sort of big shelter. Oh right, it was a sofa. He crept out, listening carefully for the Twoleg. His nose twitched and scented Onyx. He followed his nose towards the scent and found him in a big room with a white floor and at the corner, was Onyx. He slept in a big bed which did not seem to be made of moss. Wolfclaw approached then prodded Onyx hardly. He jumped up, his fur ruffled.

"What is it?" asked Onyx.

"Nothing," shrugged Wolfclaw. He yawned. He was hungry. "I'm going hunting. How do I get out of this place?" Wolfclaw didn't add that after he went hunting, he was not coming back. Onyx showed him to the flap they had gone through the other night. Wolfclaw bounded through it and tasted the fresh air. He bounded up the fence and disappeared. He needed time to think alone. He found a tree, the only shelter and climbed it. He curled up atop a branched and looked around in amazement. The Twoleg dens were gigantic. He sighed, he missed his home. He thought about the dreams with Lotusstar. He suddenly knew they were from Starclan. They must be about his father. Bramblestar must not be worthy to be leader. That's what Starclan was telling him. All those words Lotusstar had been shouting about him was not about Wolfclaw at all, it must be about Bramblestar. He smiled and rested his head on his paws, everything would be alright. He didn't know what he would find in Riverclan when he returned but he was going to take his revenge. Once he did that, he'd take over Riverclan, he'd be the great leader he'd told Hawkcloud about. Wolfclaw pricked his ear. He heard the chattering of a blackbird on top of him. Licking his lips, he slowly got up. He looked up. On the branch right above him was a blackbird. He crouched on the branch and made sure he was well balanced. He jumped and twisted. He caught the blackbird in his claws and landed on the branch on top, tipping dangerously. The blackbird squired in his paws and he bit his lip but finally

pulled himself onto the branch. Panting, Wolfclaw almost let the blackbird go but quickly bit into its neck. He sat down and ate the blackbird hungrily.

"Did you catch that by yourself?" came a voice. Wolfclaw looked down. Onyx stared back up at him. He groaned to himself.

"Yes," he mumbled through mouthfuls of blackbird. Onyx jumped onto the first branch and scaled all the way to Wolfclaw easily who tried not to look surprised.

"Sooooo," Onyx said.

"So what? I need you to stop following me," Wolfclaw decided the truth was best. "You're a kittypet for Starclan's sake. Go back to your Twoleg and I'll go do my thing."

"Awww," Onyx said disappointed. "But I could help you. Please? I know this place much better than you." Wolfclaw let a low growl escape from his throat but knew Onyx was right.

"Fine," he muttered. "But you've gotta do whatever I say."

Ch. 30

Wolfclaw approached the abandoned Twoleg nest carefully. He didn't want to get into a fight like he had the day before. His ear still burn slightly although the scratches had almost healed. Onyx had stay behind in a bramblebush. This, Onyx had said, was where he would find cats who loved blood and loved killing and taking over things. Wolfclaw slipped inside and sniffed. He smelt the scent of many cats and blood. Prey's blood as well as cat blood. He sniffed some more, he scented sickness mingled with anger. He heard a sound. It was small and any other cat would have missed it but Wolfclaw heard it. He didn't move. He took deep breaths. Suddenly, Wolfclaw felt a cat's claws on his back. Swiftly, he threw the cat off and pinned him down. He had white sleek fur and glaring red eyes. Wolfclaw growled.

"Go on, kittypet, kill me," dared the white cat.

"I'm not a kittypet!" Wolfclaw spat in the white cats face then sunk his claws into his side. The cat's eyes went wide but he didn't cry out.

"Alright then, prove yourself. Go on, kill me," taunted the cat. Wolfclaw smiled.

"I can't, because in the future, you might become my deputy. I wouldn't want to kill my future deputy would I?" Wolfclaw chuckled and let the white cat go. He gave Wolfclaw a questioning look.

"Get out," he snapped finally.

"Hey I thought we had a deal here," Wolfclaw said calmly, he licked his paw and sat down. "I need to talk to your leader. Oh it's Wolfclaw by the way. Wolfclaw of Riverclan." The white cat growled then shrugged.

"Alright then," he smiled. "But she won't be as lenient as

me."

"Even better," Wolfclaw whispered gleefully.

Ch. 31

Wolfclaw faced the black she-cat. Her muscles rippled underneath her fur and she purred. Wolfclaw felt slightly disconcerted but didn't show it. They sat facing each other in one of the various rooms in the abandoned Twoleg nest. There were cats milling about a few fox lengths away. They all had their eyes on Wolfclaw. One bad move and he was a goner.

"Soo, Clan cat, what brings you here?" the black cat's sweet but dangerous voice rang out.

"Wolfclaw, nice to meet you," Wolfclaw replied seriously.

"I can't say the same to you," replied the black cat coldly. She did not like the way this cat acted.

"Right then, let's just cut to the chase," Wolfclaw said. "I want to take over Riverclan." The black cat frowned then smiled.

"And what makes you think we'd want to do that? Or help you with that?"

"Well, I would be the leader, you could be the deputy. We'd have out whole territory to ourselves and all those cats," Wolfclaw nodded at the cats gathering around, "could be our warriors." The black cat seemed to think for a while.

"And why must *you* be leader? I should be, shouldn't I? After all, right now, you're asking *me* for help," she purred.

"That is true but I know my Clan and I know my territory and without me or my plan, you would never manage to take over Riverclan. They are strong," Wolfclaw said. He had planned all this with Onyx, although all Onyx did was try to prevent Wolfclaw from going.

"Hmmmm," thought the she-cat. "Alright." Wolfclaw frowned.

So easy? "What? Are you surprised? I agree so I'm not going to pretend to think about it for a few days. Now let's get on with it." Wolfclaw almost smiled to himself. She would be a good deputy to have. Shame he would have to kill her, sooner or later. But this was too easy. There was a catch.

"Oh and one last thing," added the cat. Wolfclaw almost sighed. "If I die, my cats will leave straight away." Wolfclaw bit his tongue. Great. Now he couldn't kill her. With great effort, he smiled.

"Of course," he said sourly. She smiled happily in return.

"Come on then, let's tell my cats the good news," she said in a sing song voice.

Ch. 32

Wolfclaw looked down at the gathering of cats beneath him. Night, the black she-cat, stood next to him.

"This is Wolfclaw from Riverclan," declared Night. "He is part of us now. *We* are your leader." The cats howled in protest but Night silenced them with a flick of her tail. "Do you not trust me?" The cats lowered their heads and mumbled to themselves. There were about twenty cats or more Wolfclaw counted. He was satisfied. It would be enough.

"We are going to find a new home," declared Night. "A home with our own food. Our own big territory where we can hunt wherever we like and raise kits."

"But first, we need to kill the Riverclan cats," growled Wolfclaw. "They are not worthy to live there. We are." The cats yowled their agreement. Wolfclaw didn't expect it to be so easy. Theses cats really did love blood. He smiled contentedly. Then his thoughts flickered to Lilacsong and Berrytail and the kits... and the queens and elders.

"Once more thing," Wolfclaw quickly added, Night shot him a look. "You are not to hurt the elders, queens and their kits." He almost added "Lilacsong and Berrytail". He would have to find another way to warn them and keep them safe. A howl of protest grew and Night turned to Wolfclaw angrily.

"What do you think you're doing?" she growled. "If we take over Riverclan, they must *all* go." Wolfclaw shivered, he was taking this a bit too far. He just wanted revenge. But he couldn't go back now.

"They have kits," said Wolfclaw. "And if they agree to join us we will spare them. If they do not want to, then you may...kill them." Wolfclaw gulped. Night smiled with satisfaction.

"That makes sense," she said then turned to her cats and howled, "You will not kill! You will give them a chance to join us and if they don't slaughter them!" Shouts and yowls went up happily. Wolfclaw unsheathed his claws and dug them into the wood. He didn't want to kill all of Riverclan, just show them revenge, show them he was strong then live happily again. And he knew how loyal his Clanmates were, they would never surrender and join these rogues. They would rather die..., and they would die. Wolfclaw took a deep breath. *You brought this to yourself, you cannot go back*. He growled under his breath then nodded to Night and jumped down. He walked out, they would meet again the next day at dawn. As he walked down the grass away from the abandoned Twoleg nest. Onyx jumped out of the bramblebush and rushed over to him.

"What happened? I heard them shouting! I thought you were dead," cried Onyx, padding next to Wolfclaw. He waved his tail.

"It was nothing," he mumbled, deep in thought. He had found loyal cats that would fight for him... well, fight for Night anyways. He didn't need the kittypet anymore. Onyx was no more use to him. He thought about killing the cat but remembered the warrior code. He was still a Riverclan warrior, wasn't he? No, he wasn't. Bramblestar had exiled him, he was a rogue. He growled. He was not a Riverclan warrior anymore. He would get his revenge and they would become Rogueclan, the strongest clan. They would not need a warrior code. He leapt at Onyx and clawed his eyes. Onyx cried out in pain. He yowled and thrashed as Wolfclaw slashed him across the neck and watched as Onyx's strength faded. He was just a useless kittypet.

"Br-br," stuttered Onyx weakly. Wolfclaw smirked. "Bramblestar was right to ex-exil...." Onyx lay still, blood still pouring out from his wounds. Wolfclaw frowned. He had killed this cat out of cold blood. But this cat was no use to him. He shrugged and walked on. Onyx's words had stung Wolfclaw but he brushed it away. Bramblestar didn't deserve to be leader. Suddenly, a black cat slipped next to him.

"I didn't think you were so cold blooded," Night said,

padding next to him. Wolfclaw growled and shrugged.

"I didn't need him anymore," he said.

"So when you don't need me or my cats, you'll throw us away?" she asked.

"No, of course not," he snapped.

"I'm just kidding," she smiled. "Chill." He huffed and sighed.

"Why are you doing this? Willing to kill innocent cats, cats who were your family?" Night asked.

"What, getting cold feet are you?" Wolfclaw growled.

"No, I just want to make sure you won't do the same to us," Night explained calmly.

"Because my so called family betrayed me, they hated me since I was born...," He trailed off. "well..., my father did."

"So you want to kill all of them because of one cat?" asked Night.

"You don't get it," snapped Wolfclaw. "It's not that. He exiled me and all the other cats stood by and did nothing. Not even my mother..., or my mate." Night raised her eyebrows.

"Looks like you need to get a new mate," she smiled, eyes twinkling. Wolfclaw frowned. He had still been looking forward to a future with Lilacsong and kits. He thought harder. It wouldn't be possible. Not after what he was going to do to Riverclan. He might be able to save her but he felt certain she would always be loyal to Riverclan. But maybe, just maybe, she might choose him instead.

"I er, maybe," shrugged Wolfclaw. Night chuckled.

"Don't worry, we have time," she said, touching her tail to his shoulder, she slipped away.

Ch. 33

"I will teach you all there is to know about Riverclan," declared Wolfclaw. "I will tell you their fighting technique and we will train. We will become Rogueclan." Night stood beside him, licking her paw, watching the crowd of cats beneath them. Howls of agreement rose. Wolfclaw puffed out his chest, more confident.

"We will train here then, we will go to the abandoned Twoleg nest in Riverclan territory and we will watch them and bring destruction to them," Wolfclaw continued. "But first, we must start acting like a Clan. For now, there will be two leaders, Night and I. We will need hunting patrols and we will train hard!" Cries and shouts of agreement rose. Wolfclaw stood proud, soaking it in.

"You must always show your power," Night told him before padding away. "Or all cats will want to overthrow you." Wolfclaw frowned but bounded down. He spotted a big tabby cat.

"You," he called. The tabby cat turned, eyebrows raised in question. "What is your name?"

"Claw," growled the cat unfriendly.

"Claw, gather five cat you want to hunt with and bring them here," ordered Wolfclaw. Claw growled but turned tail into the crowd. Night was organising fight trainings. Five cats appeared with Claw leading. A soft white she-cat eyed Wolfclaw with suspicion.

"What are your names?" demanded Wolfclaw. An orange cat stepped forward.

"I'm Flame," he said. "This is Sophia." He nodded to the white cat then tipped his tail at another tabby cat's direction. "That's Death Stripe." Without wanting an introduction a grey cat padded forward.

"I'm Dagger," he snarled and he's my brother, he pointed at a dark grey, almost black cat in the shadows. "That's Shadow." Wolfclaw nodded.

"You are on hunting patrol. Catch as much as you can and bring it back at sunset," ordered Wolfclaw before turning tail. He needed to show complete authority.

"Just because Night likes you, doesn't mean we do," snarled a low voice. It was Claw. Wolfclaw ignored him. The six cats slunk out, leaving Wolfclaw slightly doubtful about himself but he shouldered the thought away immediately.

Ch. 34

Wolfclaw licked his paw calmly. Night was sitting next to him, watching him intently.

"I think we should change their names," said Wolfclaw casually. Night lashed her tail and snarled angrily.

"That is up to them," she said finally.

"Fine, but if they want to be real warriors, it is how it goes," Wolfclaw shrugged, hoping deep down that Night agreed with him. She looked at him slowly, evaluating him and shrugged. They walked along the beam and looked down at the cats lounging below them, eating the fresh kill Claw and his patrol had caught.

"Wolfclaw, has something to say," declared Night before slinking off. Wolfclaw stood alone, looking down at the crowd of dangerous cats. They watched him expectantly. Taking a deep breath, Wolfclaw thought, *here goes nothing*.

"If you want to be real warriors, you need to have warrior names," he declared finally. The cats didn't react. Their names meant nothing to them.

"Fine," Claw called up. Wolfclaw smiled.

"Right, one by one, step out and tell me your name, I'll rename you as best as I can, *real* warrior names," Wolfclaw grinned. Claw stepped out first. He wanted to be a real warrior.

"You know my name," he growled softly. Wolfclaw nodded.

"From now on you shall be known as Clawfang, we honour you as a true warrior of Rogueclan," announced Wolfclaw. Another cat stepped up, it was Flame.

"From now on you shall be known as Flamepelt," declared Wolfclaw. "We honour you as a true warrior of Rogueclan."

Flamepelt stepped down looking proud. Death Stripe was next.

"From now on you will be Deathstripe," shrugged Wolfclaw, he didn't bother with the rest.

"Sophia," declared the white she-cat.

"From now on you shall be Icewing," Wolfclaw said.

"Dagger," Dagger said then pointed to his brother in the shadows. "And Shadow."

"From now on, you will be Brackenfur and Shadow will be Shadowtooth." More and more cats stepped out, liking the idea of warrior names.

Ch. 35

Fernbelly leapt at Wolfclaw. She pushed him down and bit his shoulder. He swung her around and onto her back but she twisted around and bit his tail. He growled and clawed at her back. She let go and they stared at each other, panting heavily.

"Good job Fernbelly," approved Wolfclaw. "Make sure your belly and back are exposed as little as often, especially your belly." Fernbelly nodded. They were in one of the many room of the abandoned Twoleg nest. Wolfclaw was training Fernbelly, Flamepelt, Littlebird and Brackenfur. He was proud of his warriors, they were skilful and strong.

"My turn," Flamepelt said jumping to his paws excitedly. Flamepelt, Wolfclaw thought, was about ten moons old and a young cat. He should have been an apprentice for two more moons but Wolfclaw knew he was strong enough and smart enough to be a warrior.

"Alright, throw everything you've got at me," smiled Wolfclaw.

Night lay down and closed her eyes, she mumbled under her breath. Wolfclaw pricked his ear.

"What was that?" he asked.

"We're ready," she said. Wolfclaw nodded. They were resting in their own den, laying on hay.

"Should we tell them?" asked Wolfclaw. Night shrugged.

"Whatever," Night smiled. "You're leader too, you need to make a few decisions yourself, you know?" Wolfclaw smiled and nodded. He got up and shook the hay off his fur. He walked along the wooden beam near the Twoleg roof and looked down at the lounging cats below him. His cats.

"Rogueclan, gather around," called Wolfclaw. The cats sat up eyes fixed on Wolfclaw. "It is time. We will go into the abandoned Twoleg nest in Riverclan territory and we will bring down destruction and wrath on Riverclan." Roars of approval went up and the cats talked to each other excitedly. Wolfclaw smiled, digging his claws in and out of the wood. Night joined him at his side, smiling.

"Tonight, we move into our new home," she growled softly but all cats heard her.

Ch. 36

More than twenty cats rushed across the Thunderpath silently under the cover of night. Their gazes were fixed on the other side and they gave off a deadly aura. Wolfclaw was at the lead with Night right behind him. He smelt Riverclan borders, almost a day old. He smiled, he was back on his territory. They headed towards Thunderclan and on their right, they spotted the abandoned Twoleg nest. The cats streamed towards it. Soon, all of them had slipped inside. It had a musty and old smell and the strong scent of prey. Wolfclaw smiled. They would be more than well fed here. His wrath had started. His revenge was near. Once they had crossed the Thunderpath, their plan had started. By sunset the next day, Riverclan would be his. Wolfclaw padded to Night's side.

"Are you alright?" he asked.

"Of course," she snapped. Smallear and Hollyleaf were guarding the Thunderpath for a Riverclan patrol and Shadowtooth, Lightcreek and Clawfang were outside of the Twoleg nest, watching. Wolfclaw walked around the Twoleg den. There were old and broken things, things he didn't understand but he caught two mice easily. He let a few of the younger warriors eat it then ordered as many warriors as he could to sleep. They needed their rest. Wolfclaw settled above the resting cats on a wooden plank and Night joined him. They each ate a mouse Foxleap had caught for them. They watched their clan proudly. The cats around them settled down and rested their heads on their paws, a few of the younger cats whispered to their friends excitedly. Wolfclaw couldn't help but be proud of the Clan he had created. He closed his eyes and fell into a restless sleep.

Lotusstar beckoned him forward with his tail. He stood near the river edge. Wolfclaw threw his head back in frustration, not again. But there was something different. Lotusstar glimmered slightly.

"It is good to see you again," Lotusstar's voice rang out. "I thought you would have left Riverclan for good."

"I did," replied Wolfclaw. "I understood what you were telling me. All those nightmares of you dying again and again. I understand, and I will make it right, Bramblestar will be overthrown. Lotusstar sighed and sat down.

"Come, sit with me," he beckoned Wolfclaw. Wolfclaw padded forward. *It's only a dream.* The dead leader of Riverclan regarded him with passive and sad eyes. Wolfclaw felt guilt flood through him and doubt crossed his mind.

"Think Wolfclaw, think," whispered Lotusstar.

"Wolfclaw!" a voice brought Wolfclaw back to consciousness. He blinked his eyes open.

"What!?" He asked groggily. Night prodded him gently. Wolfclaw felt slightly mad that Night had refused to changer her name but he shrugged it away, she as a leader, like him. She could choose for herself.

"A patrol is headed her," she said. Wolfclaw smiled.

"Right," he called all the cats. "A patrol is headed now, we will attack them. But first, we will watch them. When they come near, the three cats guarding outside will attack and Night will join along with Streampool and Foxleap if we need extra help. I must not go or they will recognise me." The cats nodded in agreemnt.

"Good," smiled Night. "The battle begins." Wolfclaw slipped towards a hole in the Twoleg den and watched as a patrol of Riverclan cats appeared. He felt a pang of homesickness. He recognised the cats. It was Silverfish, Crowfang, Palestorm and Sorrelpelt. He felt slightly relieved it wasn't Berrytail or Lilacsong. Or any of the apprentices. They reached near the Twoleg den and started to talk to themselves urgently. They had smelt them. Suddenly, Clawfang, Lightcreek, Shadowtooth, Night and Streampool jumped out. The Riverclan cats were shocked for a moment but then threw themselves into the battle. Night ripped Crowfang's throat and he lay on the floor, in a pool of blood. Wolfclaw felt sadness watch over him as he watched his former family getting shredded to pieces. Sorrelpelt fought bravely but

finally, she was too weak and collapsed to the ground. Silverfish, knowing there was no chance of surviving, fled. Wolfclaw watched her fleeing like a coward. It had started. She would alert the clan and Rogueclan would attack. Palestorm faced Night while the other Rogueclan cats watched with amusement. They didn't need to help her, she knew what she was doing. She taunted him a few times then slashed his throat open. Blood gushed out. Wolfclaw looked away and turned to his new Clan.

"The fight has begun, and our victory has just started," he declared, pushing away emotion. The cats all waited patiently to attack when the next patrol of Riverclan would arrive. Then, Wolfclaw, Clawfang, Flamepelt, Eaglestrike and Icewing would sneak to to Riverclan camp and attack from there. Wolfclaw waited patiently. Clawfang joined him, he barely had a scratch on him. Wolfclaw's promised wrath had begun.

Ch. 37

A shard of wood got stuck in his back and Wolfclaw cursed under his breath. They were sneaking away from the fight to go to Riverclan camp. Bramblestar, as Wolfclaw had predicted, had not come to the fight. The battle was raging on behind the Twoleg den. Wolfclaw signlaed with his tail and the patrol followed him wordlessly. They slipped away unnoticed. Just then, another cat jumped at them.

"I never said I trusted you," Night said when Wolfclaw gave him a questioning glance. He growled but didn't say anything. They continued towards Riverclan camp with Night. They crossed the river with big leaps and Wolfclaw ran towards Riverclan. He was home. He almost felt like an apprentice again, running around the territory, thinking how big it was. They stopped a few foxlengths away from the tunnel. They hid in brambles which pricked Wolfclaw's snout. Badgerfang was looking around, guarding the entrance. Wolfclaw signaled for Flamepelt to distract him. Flamepelt nodded and slipped out of the bush. Badgerfang heard and saw him immediatly. He leapt at Flamepelt who darted away. Wolfclaw, Night, Clawfang and Icewing slipped into the tunnel. They came out to a chaotic camp. Warriors were pacing around, talking frantically and the Blackfur had started going back to medicine cat duties. When Wolfclaw appeared, the whole Clan was silent. He waved his tail so that his patrol of Rogueclan cats would stay hidden in the tunnel. They made no noise. Then suddenly, out of nowhere leapt Lilacsong.

"Wolfclaw! You came back! Just when we need you the most!" she cried, she bounded up to him and nuzzled him lovingly. Wolfclaw was taken aback. Then came Berrytail. She padded up to him, eyes sparkling. She licked his snout lovingly. The warriors murmured to themselves then out of his den, came Bramblestar. He regarded Wolfclaw with a cool and hating expression.

"Wolfclaw," he said coldly and leapt at him. Wolfclaw

dodged the attack and yowled. The cats hidden in the tunnel appeared and attacked the warriors nearest to them. Wolfclaw battled with Bramblestar, aware of his Clanmates fighting around him. Who were his Clanmates? *Rogueclan, they're my Clanmates now*. Wolfclaw fought hard and brave, all his anger surged through. He leapt at Bramblestar, batting his ears, biting his shoulder, his tail. Bramblestar was equally strong, driven by hatred. Then something pushed into him. It was Lilacsong, she had blood dripping down her face.

"What are you doing?" she hissed. "I know you hate him but now is not the time. We need you." Wolfclaw looked over her shoulder, Rogueclan cats were battling well and Flamepelt had come to join.

"You don't understand," Wolfclaw said coldly, shouldering past her. "Don't get involved in this and you'll be spared. For once you can choose me." Lilacsong looked confused. Riverclan warriors were backing away, blood dripping everywhere, they were wary and hurt. Rogueclan had trained well. Night cornered them and they stood there, frozen not knowing what to do. Wolfclaw turned to Lilacsong but she cried out suddenly in fear. Night had brought a young cream furred she-cat, a kit, onto the High Rock.

"Wolfclaw, come join me," she purred. Wolfclaw smiled and padded up to her. Bramblestar, panting hard, was looking bewildered. Clawfang was holding him back.

"Riverclan cats, we are Rogueclan. I am Night, leader with Wolfclaw," announced Night. Riverclan cats gasped and whispered to themselves fearfully. Wolfclaw felt a shiver of excitement.

"You young warrior, I give you the honour," smiled Night. "Do you want to join Rogueclan. If you do, you will be honoured as a full warrior of Rogueclan and of course spared." The kit, Wolfclaw didn't know who it was, was shivering with fear. Lilacsong stood frozen to the spot.

"So do you want to join?" asked Wolfclaw, bending down to her face. She looked at him eyes full of fear.

"No," she said, full confidence. Night growled and was about to slash her throat but Wolfclaw saw something. Something he hadn't seen before. He glanced at Lilacsong and knew with no doubt he was right.

"Stop," he snapped and pushed Night back. She snarled at him. Wolfclaw padded over to the kit then turned to Lilacsong.

"You had kits," he whispered.

"Yes, our kits," she breathed. He dipped his head and nudged the kit down. His own kit..., but he didn't even know her name. She was so brave. Night growled at Wolfclaw.

"Getting cold feet are we?" she snarled softly.

"She's just a kit. Let the warriors choose, not the kits," replied Wolfclaw.

"The point was to set an example, now the rest will think we're being lenient," explained Night in a growl.

"Then set an example," shrugged Wolfclaw. "But not with a kit." Night lashed her tail but turned to the cats gathered beneath.

"Wolfclaw, it's your honour," she smiled. Wolfclaw nodded. He called Tallwhisker forward.

"Do you wish to join Rogueclan?" Wolfclaw asked. He hoped Tallwhisker would just say yes.

"No," growled Tallwhisker. "Never." Icewing leapt at him and slashed his throat open. He looked around, silent, eyes wide open with fear and pain then collapsed to the ground, dead. Blood poured out from his wound. Gasps and cries of horror rang out.

"Next," called Night in a sing song voice.

"Oakfur," Wolfclaw said, not as confident. He was starting to realise something. He gazed into Bramblestar's eyes. Bramblestar looked back at him and Wolfclaw saw something other than hatred. He saw pain and shame but mostly, warmth and love. Wolfclaw

staggered back as he finally understood. He hung his head. Bramblestar knew too.

Ch. 38

Wolfclaw staggered back, looking at Bramblestar's soft eyes.

"It's me isn't it?" he murmured softly. "He was talking about me." Bramblestar dropped his gaze. He nodded sadly. Wolfclaw cried out in shame.

"I'm sorry," breathed Bramblestar.

"You knew!" he cried out, not in anger, in pain and sadness at what he had become. "you knew..." Lotusstar had never been talking about Bramblestar. He had been talking about Wolfclaw and somehow, Bramblestar knew. Bramblestar gazed at Wolfclaw with love, so much love, even after what he had done. Wolfclaw had never seen his father look at him like that and he was filled with warmth.

"Why didn't you tell me?" croaked Wolfclaw.

"I trust you," murmured Bramblestar. The cats around them watched this in silent confusion. Night finally broke the awkward moment.

"*Oaaakfur,*" she meowed, come forward. She turned to Wolfclaw. "It's your honour." Wolfclaw looked at Night. Her soul was as black as her pelt. He knew what he had to do, for the sake of his Clan, Riverclan, for the sake of his kits, Lilacsong, his mother..., and his father. He didn't care if he was forever shunned or exiled once more. He turned to Night and bit into her neck. Her spine snapped and her eyes rolled into her head. Icewing, Flamepelt and Clawfang looked at Wolfclaw in disbelief and anger.

"What?" Icewing managed.

"She's dead!" he shouted. "Now do as she said, leave."

"no never," growled Flamepelt. "She wouldn't want that."

"Oh yes she would," Wolfclaw said. "She said, if I killed her, you would abandon and leave me." Clawfang looked doubtful. Hatred flared in him but he knew Wolfclaw was right. The Rogueclan cats bounded away. Wolfclaw, too tired, collapsed.

Ch. 39

// Two moons before Wolfkit and Hawkkit are born //

Brambleheart touched his nose to the Moonstone. He was quickly transported into a beautiful field of grass and flowers. The scent of prey wafted to his nose and he gazed around. A blue-grey cat appeared before him. Her pelt sparkled in the starlight.

"Brambleheart," she smiled warmly. Brambleheart dipped his head. He recognised her. She was the former leader of Riverclan, Skystar.

"Nice to see you, Skystar," Brambleheart said respectfully.

"Come, walk with me," she said simply.

"Do you need to tell me something?" asked Brambleheart. Her eyes turned serious.

"Yes," she said. "A leader will be born. His pelt, grey as a storm, his fury will lead him to try and destroy Riverclan." Brambleheart looked Skystar in disbelief.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Your kit will bring destruction to your Clan but you will not be able to do anything about. You will only trust that he will choose what is right in the end," Skystar said. Brambleheart lashed his tail angrily.

"But we can prevent it! Can't we?" He snarled. Skystar started to fade and shook her head. "Why not!? Why?"

// two moons after Wolfkit and Hawkkit's birth //

Brambleheart kept his distance from Wolfkit. He must be the cat Skystar was talking about. Brambleheart would have nothing to do with him. He didn't know what else to do. This cat was going to

bring destruction to his own Clan. His heart felt hatred for the kit but deep down, he loved Wolfkit with all his heart and all his mind.

Ch. 40

// A sunset after Lotusstar's death //

Brambleheart watched as Lotusstar fell into the river. He saw Wolfpaw, almost jumping in but he bounded up and help him back.

"An unworthy leader will try to overthrow you and destroy Riverclan!" Lotusstar's words were faint and Brambleheart barely heard them. "But you cannot stop him. Only he can stop it. You must let him choose." Brambleheart lurched back, watching Lotusstar being pulled away.

Bramblestar jolted awake. He was in his den. He shook his pelt. He had never had a livid nightmare like this before. He shivered, he felt cold to the bone, as if he had drowned instead of Lotusstar. He thought about Wolfpaw. He had learnt to hate him but he still felt the love bursting to break through his thick wall of hate.

// Six moons after Lotusstar's death //

Bramblestar watched as Lotusstar fell into the river, his eyes wide, he drowned, flailing. Wolfclaw leapt after him crying out. Bramblestar held Wolfclaw back. He didn't know why he was doing it but Lotusstar was mouthing the exact same words he had always been, "Unworthy" "overthrow" "destroy". Bramblestar knew the sentences by heart now even if he only heard a few words.

Bramblestar awoke sweating. He growled under his breath. The dreams had been coming for moons. He felt alone suddenly. He longed for Berrytail, Hawkcloud and...Wolfclaw to be with him. He sighed and rested his head on his paws. He closed his eyes on troubled thoughts.

Ch. 41

Bramblestar looked down at Wolfclaw. He was lying in his den, unconscious. He felt the love he hadn't expressed to Wolfclaw his whole life flood out. He gazed at his son with pride and love.

"Skystar was right, only you could have stopped Riverclan's destruction," he whispered softly, "and you did." He should have trusted Wolfclaw. He should have loved him even if he knew his future. Why didn't he? Because he was scared. Wolfclaw groaned and opened his eyes.

"Bramblestar?" he murmured.

"I'm here," reassured Bramblestar softly.

"I'm sorry," Wolfclaw muttered.

"I'm sorry too," whispered Bramblestar. "I love you." Wolfclaw, barely awake felt new energy surge through him. He felt the warmth love of Bramblestar seep into him and he stood shakily to his paws. He went out of the den, feeling the warm sun on his pelt.

"I love you too," he responded to his father honestly. The warriors, eating and chatting below all looked up and cheered. He was confused for a moment. Bramblestar nudged him forward.

"Lilacsong," cried Wolfclaw. He leapt at her and pressed his flank to her head. He licked her lovingly. "I love you. I'm so so sorry."

"You saved us in the end," she smiled.

"I want to meet our kits," Wolfclaw said softly. "If it's ok with you." Lilacsong beamed.

"It's more than ok," she purred. "I've been waiting for a long time." They padded to the nursery. Many warriors were dead,

including Crowfang, Sorrelpelt, Palestorm, Tallwhisker, Lightningcloud, Badgerfang, Stormfire and Tigerleaf. Wolfclaw's stomach hurt badly whenever he thought about them. How lively they were. Their personalities. But they were gone. They had fewwer warriors than ever but the nursery was full. Dusklight's kits were becoming apprentices soon and Stonepaw, Briarpaw and Leafpaw were becoming warriors very soon. Wolfclaw entered the nursery. Mousekit, Brightkit and Orangekit squealed.

"You're back!" they cried. "We're becoming apprentices soon and Orangekit wants to become a medicine cat!" Wolfclaw praised them then nodded happily to Dusklight who gazed at her kits proudly. Clovercreek was watching him with a flicker of love and warmth.

"I'm happy you're back," she smiled. Wolfclaw dipped his head respectfully. Lilacsong led him to the end of the nursery. Four kits were huddled together. He saw the cream furred she-cat Night had picked and almost killed. His kit.

"Hey," he said softly, his heart beat faster. The cats turned. The cream furred she cat smiled at him.

"You saved my life!" she cried and bounded up to him. He licked her lovingly.

"What's your name?" he asked softly.

"I'm Hawkkit," she smiled. Wolfclaw's heart dropped and his eyes went wide. Lilacsong regarded him hopefully.

"H-hawkkit," he whispered. Emotion gripped him as he thought of his brother. "Hawkkit." he nuzzled her. "You'll be as brave as my brother. I just know it." Lilacsong let out a sigh of relief. The other kits looked at Wolfclaw shyly. Hawkkit flicked her tail at a grey and brown cat.

"This is Eaglekit," she smiled. Eaglekit smiled shyly.

"Eaglekit! What a beautiful name," cried Wolfclaw. He padded over to his son and nuzzled him gently. Eaglekit puffed out

his chest in pride. Not shy anymore, a light brown kit bounded up to Wolfclaw.

"And I'm Fogkit," he said. Wolfclaw smiled proudly.

"You're already so big and strong," he praised. The last kit was smaller, she had mixed grey fur like Wolfclaw. She looked at Wolfclaw and tilted his head.

"You saved our Clan. My father saved Riverclan," she smiled.

"I di-didn't," Wolfclaw stammered.

"I'm Pigeonkit," she smiled. Wolfclaw had never felt more at home.

"Yesterday, was a dark time and we lost eight good warriors but today is a new day and although we mourn for our brave warriors, they are at peace hunting with Starclan, we have two announcements to make," declared Bramblestar. The cats watched intently.

"Brightkit and Mousekit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Brightpaw and Mousepaw. Your mentor, Mousepaw, will be Wolfclaw. I hope he will pass down all heshe knows on to you. He is an exceptional cat," declared Bramblestar. Wolfclaw's eyes almost popped out. Hawkkit pushed him forward excitedly.

"You're a mentor!" she cried. Wolfclaw padded forward to the small grey apprentice and touched noses with him.

"You're going to become a great warrior. I've strayed from Riverclan a few times but it has made my loyalty stronger, I promise I will teach you everything there is to know to become a noble warrior," whispered Wolfclaw into Mousepaw's ear.

"Brightpaw, your mentor shall be Ottercry, I know she will pass down her knowledge to you. And Orangekit has chosen to learn the ways of a medicine cat. Voletooth, I know you will pass down all you know to her and show her the ways of a medicine cat,

from this day on till you recieve your warrior name, you shall be Orangpaw," announced Bramblestar. Ottercry padded forward and touched noses with a bouncing Brightpaw. Orangepaw did the same with Voletooth. Before the Clan could call out their names, Bramblestar continued, "I, Bramblestar, leader of Riverclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices.Who have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warriors in their turn." He beckoned Stonepaw, Briarpaw and Leafpaw over. They bounded up looking proud and confident.

"Briarpaw, Stonepaw and Leafpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do," echoed the three cats solemnly.

"Then by the I give you your warrior names, Briarpaw, from now on you will be known as Briarwing, Starclan honours your honesty and commitment. Stonepaw from this moment on you will be known as Stonebreezeand, Starclan honours your bravery and loyalty, Leafpaw from this moment on you will be known as Leafdapple, Starclan honours your cleverness and intelligence. We welcome you as full warriors of Riverclan!" finished Bramblestar.

"Stonebreeze!"

"Leafdapple!"

"Mousepaw!"

"Leafdapple!"

"Brightpaw!"

"Briarwing!"

"Orangepaw!" Wolfclaw saw his four kits join in with the chorus of voice and felt a warm glow. Somebody touched his side. It was Bramblestar.

"I'm officially a grandfather, aren't I?" he joked. Wolfclaw

smiled and nodded. "Your kits will become grand warriors, especially Hawkkit. I can see her potential." Wolfclaw nodded with pride.

"Thanks," he said then turned to Mousepaw. "Come on, do you want to see the territory?" With three new warriors and three new apprentices, Wolfclaw knew Riverclan would recuperate to be a strong Clan once more. Once his kits became apprentices, he was sure they would do very well. He smiled to himself as he led Mousepaw out. None of his Clanmates held any grudges against him, they only mourned the dead. He felt a lightness in his step. All was well.

// E P I L O G U E //

"Hawkpaw!"

"Fogpaw!"

"Eaglepaw!"

"Pigeonpaw!"

"Mousetail!"

"Orangesky!"

"Brightbramble!" Wolfclaw howled loudly the new names of his kits. He saw them stood proudly and felt a glow of warmth. Lilacsong pressed herself closer to him. He smiled at her.

"I'm so proud of them," he whispered to her. Hawkpaw bounded up to Wolfclaw.

"I'm an apprentice!" she yowled. Wolfclaw smiled at her then cuffed her playfully on the ear. He gave Pigeonpaw and Fogpaw each a proud congratulations and praise then a lick on the ear with affection.

"I'm so excited," squealed Hawkpaw.

"You're going to do great," he praised then saw Eaglepaw looking slightly unsure. He padded over to his son.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"I'm scared," he meowed. "What if I'm not good enough and never become a warrior?"

"That will never happen!" Wolfclaw assured. "You're the most determined cat I've ever seen. You're going to do great. You just need to trust yourself. I'm so proud of you." He licked Eaglepaw

on the ear. Eaglepaw beamed at the praised. Suddenly, a hush spread through the Clan. An orange cat padded into camp. A few cats bristled and Bramblestar growled. Wolfclaw pushed Eaglepaw and his kits back. He didn't want them getting hurt.

"Bring them away, this smells like trouble," Wolfclaw said to Lilacsong. Lilacsong gathered their kits and herded them to the nursery.

"But we're apprentices now," groaned Fogpaw. Wolfclaw advanced and pushed through the crowd. Sitting in the middle was Flamepelt. Bramblestar barred his teeth and Lionheart was ready to pounce any moment.

"What are you doing here?" snarled Wolfclaw, coming near Flamepelt. He pressed his face to Flamepelt. His past came back to him like a wave. He remembered Night, he remembered Clawfang.... *stop! He was different now*.

"Wolfclaw," smiled Flamepelt, brightening. "I want to join Riverclan." Gasps echoed through the clearing. Bramblestar lashed his tail.

"You come to us, after attacking our camp, asking to *join*?" growled Bramblestar incredulously.

"Well, yes," Flamepelt admitted. "I was really looking forward to living in a Clan and since Rogueclan didn't work out..., Riverclan will do." Wolfclaw rolled his eyes, he didn't need a reminder of Rogueclan.

"No," Bramblestar said.

"Please," begged Flamepelt.

"No," growled Bramblestar once more, more forecfully, he took a dangerous step forward. Wolfclaw saw the look of disappointment on the young cat's face.

"Bramblestar," Wolfclaw interrupted. "We should give him a chance."

// O A K F U R ' S R E V E N G E //

[image]

Oakfur's revenge is the sequel to Wolfclaw's wrath.

Go check it out -> *on my account or* https://www.wattpad.com/640589763-oakfur%27s-revenge-p-r-o-l-o-g-u-e

// **Short extract** //

Oakfur felt his pelt bristle as he watched Wolfclaw padding down from the leader's den. He slunk into the shadows and watched as all around him, his Clanmates rose to cheer for the cat who had destroyed their Clan. They cat who had killed nine of their warriors. He remembered the dying face of Owltooth as she slowly lost her life. He remembered the anger rising to his throat for the cat who had killed his mother and brother. He growled under his breath. For a moment, Wolfclaw looked confused then he joined Lilacsong and they padded to the nursery, bright smiles on their faces, pelts brushing. Oakfur caught the look of warm love Bramblestar gave to his son as he walked away. Wolfclaw had betrayed their Clan and in return, he got the love of his father, the leader, the love of a mate and his own kits. Oakfur couldn't suppress the snarl rising in his throat. It wasn't fair. Sometimes, things weren't fair. And this time, it was up to him to make it fair.